THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E.

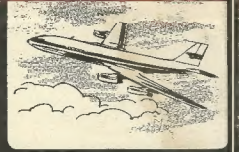
ANNUAL

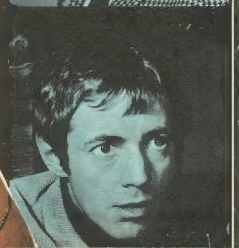
AUTHORISED EDITION

Starring

STEPHANIE POWERS as APRIL DANCER

and NOEL HARRISON as MARK SLATE





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A bomb in hand

ACT I

"WHAT possessed Mr. Slate I cannot imagine, Miss Dancer," said Mr. Waverly drily. "He was instructed merely to warn the Princess against abdicating in favour of her nephew, Otto, not to assassinate the man and cause a deal of damage to the royal flooring."

"Otto was blown up, you say, sir?"

"Alas for U.N.C.L.E., only partly. He lives, minus his red curls, to serve THRUSH again."

Under her cool exterior, April repressed a niggle of anxiety. "You want me to fly to Nechke and rescue Mr. Slate?"

"Extricate him is the more correct term, I think, Miss Dancer." Mr. Waverly indicated the map of Europe on the wall before them. "Here, you see, is Nechke, one of those tiny fragments of the Holy Roman Empire founded by Charlemagne, thrusting its nose—and indeed its fifty-eight miles is nearly all nose—deeply into Western Europe. Up to now it has always been an independent, incurious nose. With Otto on the minute throne it could become an exceedingly troublesome one.

"Desperate as Mr. Slate might have found the situation with the Princess about to sign the Royal Abdication and the crowd below waiting to acclaim their new ruler, Mr. Slate should not—without further instructions—have conveyed a bomb into Otto's pocket."

A picture flashed into April's head of Otto seized mid-way across the stateroom floor with an imminent desire to sneeze and dragging handkerchief and bomb from his pocket as Mark vanished silently stairwards.

Nevertheless: "Mr Slate does not usually bungle things, sir."

"No, Miss Dancer; hence my curiosity to hear *his* account of the

affair. Once in the capital you will contact an U.N.C.L.E. sympathiser whom you will find, he informs us, cleaning the statues in the Gardens of Illustrious Memory."

"Yes, sir."

"Er, Miss Dancer. . . ."

April turned inquiringly.

"My regards to Mr. Slate."

April inclined her dark head.

ACT II

Because the information sneaked to U.N.C.L.E. by the cleaner of statues had verified the growing suspicion that Otto, despite his declarations of enmity towards THRUSH was indeed one of their pawns, and not at all the good-natured, unambitious fellow he seemed, April decided it would be prudent to keep her connection with U.N.C.L.E. secret—at first anyhow. She would appear as nothing more disturbing than an out-of-season tourist.

The Princess, until she had broken a thigh five years ago, had been known to cycle extensively throughout her country, and even now, despite her seventy-four years, she was to be met with in the most surprisingly ordinary places where she would obligingly sign autographs in exchange for a contribution to the royal charities.

Nechke, when April arrived at the sole diminutive airport, was crunchy under its first topping of snow. The cleaner of statues, though silvery light was now filling the Gardens of Illustrious Memory, was still atop his ladder brushing the snow that clung like white lichen from the niches of a stone juggler. This, April learnt from a devout plunge into her guide-book, was one of a group of five entertainers who had enjoyed great royal favour until their deaths in an aircrash, five years before, as they had been returning from an exchange visit to another country.

With a wary glance—for once she had fancied feet other than her own were treading the long cypress walk to the Gardens—around the statues, some shrouded in canvas, some wearing frosted chaplets about their heads, April began a very non-tourist conversation with the cleaner, himself grey and remote in a long overall and peaked cap.

"The Princess," he observed, "will be greatly annoyed *this* statue is not finished."

"Where is Mr. Slate?" demanded April, more concerned just then about her fellow agent than the uncleaned juggler.

"Incarcerated, by the Princess's own order, in the least accessible of the state dungeons. Its grille fronts the river, and at times of flood is completely submerged."

At least there was no flood now, thought April with relief.

"When will the trial be?"

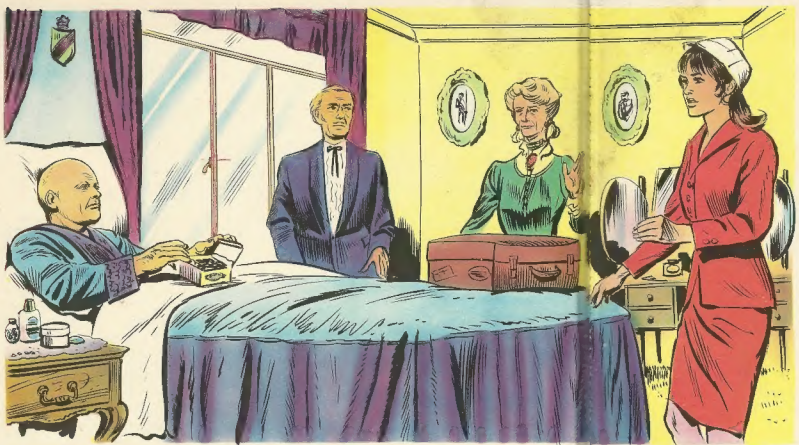
The cleaner of statues gave her question thought as he descended level with the upraised hands of the juggler and began gently to chafe them, as if he would bring back life to the delicate, once adroit fingers.

"Not," he said, at length, "before the wig-maker has given Duke Otto new flaming locks." He took from his pocket a chisel, ran his forefinger over its tip approvingly, and returned it to his pocket.

April subdued a desire to shake the ladder until he toppled from it.

"The wig-maker," he added, "a Mademoiselle Blanche Coquard, has not arrived at the palace as expected.

"Do you," he demanded, peering down at her, "know anything about wigs?"



"Less than you know about the whereabouts of Mademoiselle Coquard," admitted April, repressing a grin.

To that, as he re-climbed the ladder, trailing a canvas pall, he deigned no answer.

"Come closer," he ordered. Thinking he had something of sudden import to tell her, she stood close against the statue's legs, head uplifted. Fatal obligement! At once she and the juggler were enveloped in the canvas shroud.

"Quiet," he hissed, as she began to struggle, "if you wish to live."

She heard the stump of feet, voices—muffled to her ears by the canvas. The statue-cleaner's words had been no threat then, but a warning! From the ladder he had espied the approach of men who must not know she was there. Otto's men? THRUSH agents?

Another sound of movement. The scrape of the ladder being withdrawn the pall hung complete now. . . . A reminding voice upraised as footsteps retreated. Then the spinning of a rope about the double statue; April's warm body pinioned against the lifeless one. A finger suddenly poked through a tiny rent level with her forehead, giving her air—and hope.

Silence now. Cold creeping out of the statue's limbs into her own. To struggle warmed her, but brought no loosening of the rope.

Her confidence that the cleaner would return to release her grew numb as her body. Time itself congealed.

The canvas, despite the hole, had no pleasant smell at such close quarters. She lifted and thrust forward her head, so that with some chafing of her nose she was able to widen the hole further. She tore at the frayed lower edge with her teeth.

"Who are you, and what are you doing in there?" demanded a voice.

April applied an eye to the hole, meeting there a turquoise eye, which despite its owner's quavering voice, was startling in its brilliance.

April produced a lame excuse, yet one, she hoped, that would provoke no awkward questioning. "I—I think it was a joke," she said.

A hiss from the other side of the canvas. "Those boys again!"

April let it stand. But still the first question was unanswered.

"I," said the turquoise eye, "am the Princess Clara." She waited expectantly.

"A—the wig-maker, your highness."

"My poor child! Did the boys inveigle you here? Why we have a taxi standing by at the airport all afternoon. Never mind, never mind —I will have you cut free in a moment."

A footman, powdered and breeched, released April. Another mounted a ladder to place the chaplet of white flowers, which the Princess had brought, about the juggler's head. Other chaplets were placed on the other four heads, and April was driven back to the palace in the Princess's car.

"A sad anniversary, my dear," said the Princess, who had travelled pensively. "You have a room in the same wing as my nephew, who incidentally is in a great state of shock still. Your pretty face will do much to cheer him!"

The suitcase upon the rose quilted bed, which had been placed there during the Princess's absence, was of course the wig-maker's. April was relieved to discover that she and Blanche Coquard had figures, if not talents, alike.

Poor Otto was still abed, stuffing himself, until someone's approach, with figs and crystallised ginger. His eyebrows, like his hair, had gone. He removed a satin hood with some embarrassment and much self-pity wincing at the lightest touch upon his scalp.

His friend, whom he had brought to Nechke with him, kept an unwavering eye upon everything that happened, but also, April noticed, it was a puffy, dark-encircled eye, betraying that its owner had had a more disturbed night than the invalid. April took some measurements, and produced the lengths of flame-coloured hair she had found in Blanche Coquard's suitcase. Otto gulped affectingly, and the Princess took his plump hand in her own wiry one.

"It could have been worse, Otto," she comforted him. "You might have had no head."

A spasm passed through his friend's body.

ACT III

Back in her room April took out her tiny radio transmitter. No answer! No answer at all! She looked out of her window. If Mark's cell faced the river then she must have a boat out tonight and talk to him through the grille.

There was a knock upon her door. The Princess desired her company at dinner. Otto's friend was there, too, looking unhappy, and eating a great many oranges at dessert.

"You really must not take Otto's accident to heart so much," scolded the Princess. "You will make yourself ill."

"What will happen to the er—assassin?" inquired April.

"Well, we have abolished the death penalty, you know, so I suppose we shall just have to keep him incarcerated.

"Mind you," said the Princess, resuming the conversation when they were all taking coffee in Otto's room, "I think the old punishments were best."

April raised a slightly apprehensive brow.

"Tongues out for traitors; ears off for eavesdroppers; hands off for pickpockets. Don't you agree, Otto?" The Princess broke off there, however, because Otto had drowned the front of his damask dressing-gown in coffee. "My dear!"

April's eye swivelled to his friend who had made a slight slop down his own shirt-front. For the first time she saw a glint of humour in his pale eyes.

"Really I am not at all in favour of trials," continued the surprising Princess. "Such confusing, drawn-out affairs. Stir one up most uncomfortably."

Otto and his friend exchanged looks. Afterwards, even though April was kept at the Princess's side all evening, the young agent blamed herself for not having acted immediately upon those looks.

"You shall begin work upon the wig tomorrow, my dear," said the Princess, tapping April on the wrist with her embroidery needle.

ACT IV

Escaping from the palace, despite the patrolling guards in their silver breastplates and plumed, forehead-concealing helmets, was not difficult when you were the expert climber from windows and leaper of spiked walls that an U.N.C.L.E. agent had to be.

April reached the river, and drew

out upon its dark surface one of the little boats she found moored alongside. A mile to the cell that faced the river. She tried once more to contact Mark by radio, and sighed at the silence. Her anxiety to see him grew.

A light bobbed afar to the right, and, as she neared it, an engine began to throb. The bigger boat came at her, prow uplifted; at first, she thought, bent on running her down, as it was half drowning the little boat in its wild wake.

She saw a yellow gash appear where the grille of the cell should have been, and then the violence of that which had been hurled within, spewed out the resulting rubble.

There were shouts, and she saw the irregular edges of the gap in the wall widen as more rubble was swallowed by the agitated water. Lights were appearing higher in the gaol.

ACT V

"Most distressing," said the Princess, when April had returned to the palace; drenched and emptied of hope. "I feared someone *might* take the law into their own hands. Believe me, I had double guards posted inside the gaol. Two perpetually outside Mr. Slate's door. Of course I did not think of the grille. Two explosions in two days. First my nephew and now that young man who, apart from his lethal tendencies, was quite nice."

Quite nice!

"Look," began April, "you've got to realise. This is THRUSH at work. They want control of this country. Bases for spying, sabotage. . ."

"You are overlooking one prime fact, my dear. The first explosion, an attempt to cause the disintegration of my nephew, was caused by U.N.C.L.E. You, I, the world, I believe, knows my nephew's views. Would you have me distrust him?"

"Yes."

"Am I to suppose then that he blew himself up? Or that THRUSH planted that bomb in his pocket a minute before he was to be declared the new ruler?"

"That doesn't make sense."

"It does not, my dear. Therefore, neither does your argument that there are THRUSH agents in this palace working—hand in glove, is it not?—with my nephew.

"How do I know, as you were upon the river tonight, that it was not you who threw the bomb into poor Mr. Slate's cell?"

April gasped, and, looking up, saw Otto's friend standing in the doorway. Just where had *he* been these past two hours? she wondered.

He had been with the patient of course—according to Otto—when the Princess went to his room to bid him goodnight. The explosion had given his bald head an ache; and had they fished the assassin out of the river yet he demanded.

The Princess dismissed his friend, saying she herself would sit with her nephew until he slept, and any suspicions April had about a secret tête-à-tête between nephew and aunt vanished when, having fixed to an adjoining wall her newly issued X-ray eye that gave her a minute, orbicular view, April saw Otto's head drop heavily back on to the pillows.

Then she remembered that it was the Princess who had stirred the heaped teaspoons of sugar into Otto's chocolate.

April quickly inserted the special lens that gave her a larger, manœuvreable view, and watched the Princess make a search of Otto's belongings that would have done credit to an experienced police officer—or a secret agent!

With a satisfied intake of breath, the Princess thrust her hand deep into her nephew's hatbox and removed, presumably from a false bottom, one bright object after another. One, a silver-wrought tape measure, she put into her own pocket.

Another brought the blood hot,

then cold, to April's throat. Mark's radio! No wonder there had been no answer!

The Princess examined this with great interest. Then she brought out a pair of gloves, hand-embroidered and very beautiful, and laid these for a moment against her cheek. When she put them down, April saw that their dark surface was a-sparkle with tears. These, too, the Princess kept. The other objects she locked back in the hatbox.

As the Princess rose, April's X-ray eye discerned a natural eye gleaming palely at the keyhole of the door opposite. It vanished immediately but April realised that Otto's friend must now be tip-toeing silently along the corridor back to his room. He, alas, was as wise as she!

April did not return to her room, but followed the Princess to hers, watched her put on a fur cape and boots, and creep from her own palace as silently as a ghost, with a knowing finger-on-lips first to this guard and then another; then down the wide steps and across the snow-furred yard to the royal garages.

April quickly learnt that if the Princess could no longer pedal a bike, she could sit astride one fitted with an engine. There was nothing for it but to follow her on an ordinary bike, and, like the Princess, keep to the dark shelter of the evergreens that lined the capital's streets. At the Gardens of Illustrious Memory, the Princess went direct to the juggler; no longer shrouded; no longer wearing its chaplet of flowers.

April heard her little cry of horror; and saw that the upraised hands had been removed.

The Princess dropped the gloves she had brought, and wept, it seemed repentantly, for over and over again she moaned: "Forgive me."

ACT VI

Next morning, however, it was an angry, red-cheeked Princess who pretended to hear the news of the vandalism for the first time from her chief of police. Otto's cheeks turned positively the colour of putty.

The wig-maker, that imposter, she was to blame for this! the Princess stormed. The world council should

near of U.N.C.L.E.'s activities in Nechke. The girl should be put back on the plane she had arrived on which was, fortunately, due to return to New York that day.

April's quite tricky escape from the palace, via the roof, was in vain. The Princess's guards were waiting for her calmly, obviously posted in expectation. She was put into a car and the doors secured from the outside. A glass panel, operated by a switch on the dashboard, separated her from the chauffeur.

The Princess emptied the entire contents of her handbag on to the ground, and handed it to her empty.

"I would not like your secret weapons used against my chauffeur," she declared. And finally: "You will not need Mademoiselle Coquard's luggage now, I presume?"

As the car drove out of the palace gates, April had a glimpse of Otto's friend watching—she knew with intense satisfaction—her departure. U.N.C.L.E. routed completely. It was unbearable, and so was the fate of Mark Slate.

Though the car drove into the airport, and indeed right up to the waiting plane, April was not ordered out, and after a few moments the chauffeur calmly turned the car round again and this time made for the country. He adjusted his mirror with a gloved hand, and April recognised the cleaner of statues.

"You!" she exploded. "You cut off the juggler's hands."

He nodded.

"Why?"

"The Princess had to know. How else would she trust you?"

"Trust *me*!" April repressed the desire to lash this idiot with her sarcasm. "Did you mean me to be left tied to that wretched statue all night?"

"That was unfortunate. The Duke Otto's friend and two of his companions came that way, looking, I thought, for someone." He paused meaningfully. "For us to have been found together would have ruined everything."

"I see."

"Afterwards there were complications. Mademoiselle Coquard tried to escape."

"Where are we going now?" demanded April, opening her handbag and then remembering that the spray she wanted had been emptied out with the other contents. The chauffeur smiled at her amazement,

for within the bag was just *one* item: Mark Slate's radio!

"The Princess thought he would like it back," said the chauffeur as he drove her into the darkness of a twin-mouthed tunnel, shot, at intervals, with breathtaking porthole views of the wild country that lay at the tip of Nechke's long nose.

"Why do you speak of Mark—Mr. Slate—as if he were still alive, when you know . . . ?" The man deigned no reply, and April refused to choke on further.

A shooting lodge appeared among the firs, white as the whirling snowflakes.

April gasped again, as a grinning Mark emerged to greet them.

"Thought you'd be sent here for your own safety," he declared.

"You weren't in that dungeon last night," said April, rather angry that the chauffeur was grinning again as he drove away.

"Me? I've been waiting here for things to come to boiling-point."

April thought unspeakable things.

"Chiefly," said Mark, stirring the logs into a blaze, "I've been wondering how that idiot Otto got himself blown up."

April sighed. "He's a cleptomaniac. Can't resist anything that glitters. That bomb must have been *prettily* disguised. I suppose his friend —who *is* a THRUSH agent . . . ?"

Mark nodded.

"Put the bomb in *your* pocket. Otto saw him, and, not having been told of the plan, removed the bomb into his own pocket. When he seized his handkerchief . . . ."

Mark began to laugh. "Imagine if it *had* killed him."

"The THRUSH agent has! No doubt he's also been imagining the reception he'll get when he's recalled."

"The Princess confided to me that if she put me in the state gaol someone would see I came to a sticky end." Mark stretched his legs. "How is Otto?"

"Very bald."

When it came to the statue, however, Mark shook his head. The significance of the lopped hands conveyed nothing to him, though obviously, he agreed, they had to the Princess. The gloves—had they once been meant for the juggler? Had she embroidered them? Had she gone out of curiosity last night to see if they would have fitted him?

All Mark knew was that a chaplet of flowers was placed upon the statues' brows on the anniversary of their originals' deaths. The Princess made no open ceremony of this. It was simply done, and no doubt like many things, done by herself. She had refused vehemently to listen to U.N.C.L.E.'s warning until *after* the explosion. Very strange.

Surprising news came over the Nechke radio at mid-day. The Princess had decided to delay her abdication no longer. Because her nephew was making such a splendid recovery, Nechke should have its new ruler today. But, fearing the excitement might be harmful to him, the Princess desired no demonstrations outside the palace; no crowd.

"There's a car for use round the back," said Mark. "THRUSH must have taken over the palace."

It was as they dropped towards the tunnel that they saw the chauffeur's car lying far below, black and mangled against the snow. Its bullet-shattered windscreen glittered in the sun. Tyre-marks had churned the fresh snow into ghastly furrows.

"Someone was waiting for him," said Mark.

Someone, they knew, would be waiting for them, but they could find no alternative to going through the tunnel. Mark drove carefully. April kept her hand upon the gun she had taken from the lodge.

"We must be near the end now," she whispered.

Mark's cry snatched her eyes from the portholes, which, as on the way out, she had been counting.

Out of the darkness a yellow-eyed demon that had no right to be in this nostril of the tunnel at all, was coming at them with savage intent . . . its own destruction and theirs its obvious purpose.

Mark blared his hooter, he knew futilely. The eyes loomed large, larger. . . .

Mark pulled hard on the brake.

"Jump," he yelled to April, and he jumped himself, pressing flat against the side of the tunnel as the oncoming vehicle reared into the other forcing it back with its uncontrollable impetus.

Proof that this was no accident—had they needed proof—lay, Mark knew, in the fact that no high-pitched whine began to vibrate warningly throughout the tunnel; no erubescent light flashed in the roof above the mashed wreckage.

April switched on a torch. "Nobody driving it," she muttered.

"Had an idea there wasn't."

"But there must have been originally."

"Well somebody had to start it off." Mark, too, reached for his revolver.

They went forward warily, keeping close to the darker side of the tunnel, knowing in a moment they would be revealed in the light entering the mouth.

The expected bullet came; ricocheting harmlessly beyond them; was answered. Another came, and another. . . .

Mark edged forward. The fourth sprayed the toe of his shoe with fragments of concrete. Mark pressed his trigger, drawing into the tunnel an angry spray of bullets whose wild progress echoed mockingly. Mark's third shot brought a sharply repressed cry—silence—and then the hasty scrape of boots upon rattling stones.

"Winged but still able to fly," gritted Mark, hasty footed in pursuit.

"Back," hissed April warningly.

The ground blew up in front of them. Sulphurous clouds began to roll lethally within the confines of the tunnel.

No time to retreat—the palace must be reached before the Princess was forced to sign the abdication papers. Backwards lay defeat—forwards death.

Holding a handkerchief over her nose, April watched while Mark sprayed the nearest porthole with liquid from a pocket-sized container labelled Nasal Decongestant. What it would have done to their nasal passages is debatable; it promptly melted the glass into a sticky mess that could be ripped aside. The two U.N.C.L.E. agents jumped out on to the steep hillside where the snow lay sparsely, blown as it had attempted to settle.

Their attacker, hurrying as rapidly as his injured shoulder would allow, turned in alarmed surprise at the betraying landslide of rock fragments. He took aim; missed and aimed again. Then, realising he could not delay the two darting, leaping figures, he raced for his truck waiting on the track below. Panic-stricken he gripped the brake.

As the truck leapt forward, April tore at the tailboard, lost several fingernails, but managed to grasp it, and hauled her legs up after her. Before the driver had time to exchange the steering wheel for his gun, she had gripped his neck between steely palms and was forcing it back at an excruciating angle. He sagged temporarily into a quieter, gentler world, and April stopped the wildly lurching truck.

"Transport?" she grinned back at Mark, adjusting her cap.

ACT VII

Their entry into the palace, once they were over the high spiked wall, was made silently by means of judo.

April recognised none of the new guards they left lying quietly in the corridors; she doubted if any of them spoke German with the Nechke dialect.

The U.N.C.L.E. agents had reached the great double doors of the stateroom itself *and* disposed of the two guards they had found straddle-legged outside it when the doors were flung open abruptly from the inside by another guard, and each of them was gripped in a strong hand and hauled inside.

The Princess, looking her full years now, was diminutive at the enormous desk, papers before her, pen already in quivering hand. Otto, bald but triumphant, was beside her, in full officer's uniform and pressing his bottom lip over his top one in anticipation.

On a side table were mockingly set decanters of wine, fruit, wafers. . .

The Princess, all six people in the room knew, would have little time

left to live once the abdication papers were signed. An accident, an affecting funeral, and Otto, meaning THRUSH, would be free of any danger of insurrection.

"No accidents this time," gloated Otto.

"You should learn to keep your hands in your own pockets," snapped the Princess, with sudden asperity, and then she sighed, wishing she had not taken so long to realise. Why, if she had not remembered that boyhood weakness of his, she might still be deluded.

"Sign," ordered Otto.

"You killed my juggler," accused his aunt.

"You should not have set him juggling with state secrets," retorted Otto. "I thought you had sent him to spy on me.

"Had he talked," he added indifferently, "he might have kept his hands if not his life."

"Beast!"

"We are not here to quarrel over the dead," interrupted Otto's friend, now very much in authority, "but to give power to the living. Four entertainers died in an air-crash five years ago and one perished in a riverside house two hundred miles away. What then?" The gun looked ugly in his huge white hand.

"The surgeon died a week ago," put in the guard roughly.

Otto looked angrily to his friend to put the soldier in his place. But the soldier, holding each of their wrists crushed in his fingers, had swung April and Mark towards the side table.

"That's right, you cover them with your gun," he told Otto's friend. And suddenly he had all the oranges from the dish in his hands, and was juggling with them.

"Stop him!" yelled the outraged Otto, retreating towards the window.

The soldier followed him, juggling the oranges within an inch of the Duke's terrified nose.

Still keeping the oranges aloft with one hand, he took off his helmet and bowed his head mockingly.

"You're dead! Dead!" screamed Otto. "You're only a statue!"

As Otto's friend took aim to fire, one of the oranges came spinning over the juggler's shoulder to blow up the floor in front of him. April pounced on the dropped gun.

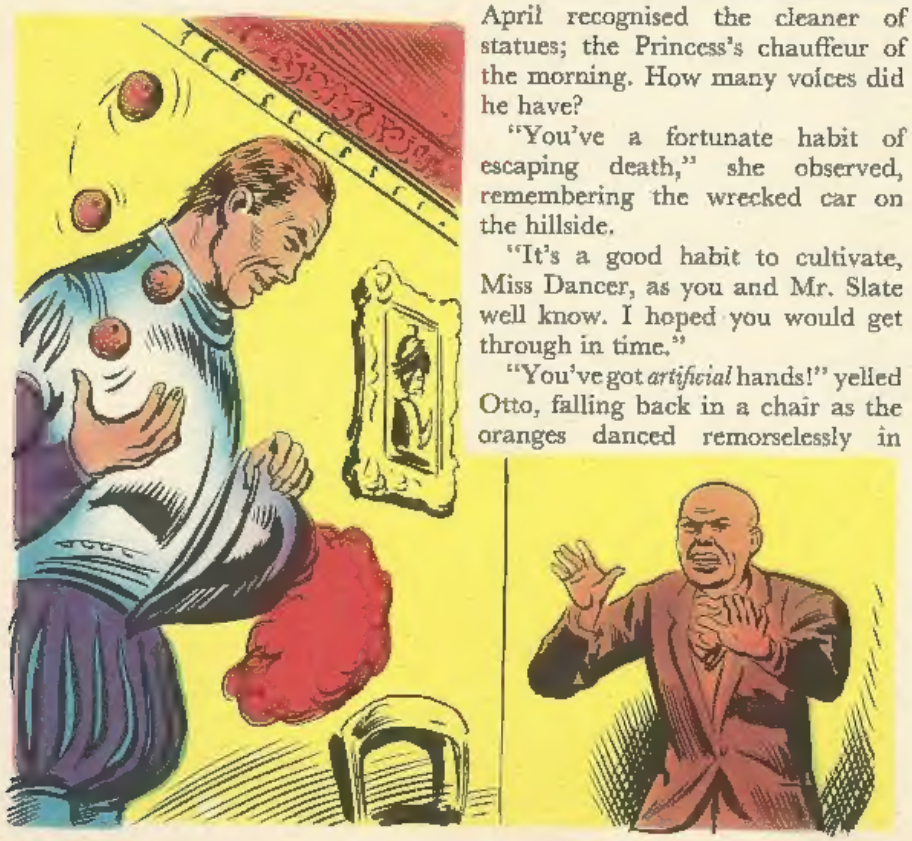
"Now, Duke," said the juggler, forcing Otto back towards the desk.

Able now to see the man's face April recognised the cleaner of statues; the Princess's chauffeur of the morning. How many voices did he have?

"You've a fortunate habit of escaping death," she observed, remembering the wrecked car on the hillside.

"It's a good habit to cultivate, Miss Dancer, as you and Mr. Slate well know. I hoped you would get through in time."

"You've got *artificial* hands!" yelled Otto, falling back in a chair as the oranges danced remorselessly in front of his eyes. Desperately he sought an explanation of the nightmare.



"No." The juggler extended one towards him. "The surgeon could not risk his hospital being destroyed; he had to obey you; but the job done, you were too squeamish to remain. He put my hands back on! The operation began even as you hurried, green-cheeked, from the house. It was not *my* body, but a handless dummy in my clothes, that you watched lowered into the river from your hotel window that night. A miracle," said the juggler, smiling ironically, "and my surgeon dared boast of it to no one. Nor dare I to reveal I was still living, unless I wished to forfeit the life of the man who had saved me."

The Princess was weeping softly into her own withered hands. All this happening while she lay ill with her broken thigh!

Suddenly Otto's friend lurched back upon April and the gun she was holding. As she fell she flung her arms around his neck and despite his titanic efforts to get free held him grimly until Mark yanked him to his feet again.

"I think," said April, shaking the creases from her skirt, "we had better release the Princess's real guards and—er—restore things to normal."

ACT VIII

"Good," said Mr. Waverly. "I should have enjoyed the spectacle of Otto racing across the royal lawn pursued by exploding oranges. THRUSH, I presume, had supplied the fruit? A case of removing a bungling agent and allowing Duke Otto his revenge with one orange as it were! Poor man, he was hardly any more guilty than Mr. Slate for Otto's lost curls.

"And you say that the Princess has decided not to abdicate after all, and that upon her death her great nephew, Josef of Upper Sleisse, now fifteen, will rule. Good! I think we can congratulate ourselves that the nose of Nechke is safe and the nose of THRUSH put thoroughly out of joint, Miss Dancer."

"Yes, sir."

The DUTCH WINDMILL AFFAIR

ACT I

AS the middle-aged farm worker wearily pedalled his ancient bicycle along the quiet and deserted road, he glanced up and across the open countryside in the direction of the old windmill, a couple of fields away.

His eyes moved off the dilapidated structure almost before his mind had registered its presence. Holland abounds with such windmills and there was nothing special about this one to warrant a second glance.

Except to a raven-haired girl in the near-by village.

From the bedroom window of her small hotel room she had spotted the approach of the man on the bicycle. Her body had stiffened slightly as she adjusted her powerful field-glasses to sharpen her focus on him.

"Hmm . . ." she murmured to herself. "Seems innocent enough."

But April Dancer, the famous U.N.C.L.E. agent, was trained to suspect even the most unsuspecting. Her glasses followed the bicycle along the road until it disappeared from her view behind some farm buildings.

Only when she had fully satisfied herself that there was nothing significant about the incident, did she permit the glasses to ease from her eyes. Her body relaxed slightly, though she kept her gaze focused on and around the isolated windmill.

It looked shabby and derelict: certainly not the kind of place to warrant the continuous attention of such a top agent as April. But the Girl from U.N.C.L.E. had travelled to Holland on one of the most vital missions of her career with the international law-enforcement organisation; and though she was sitting in a small room in an undistinguished hotel in a remote and unprepossessing part of Holland, the unlikely surroundings had not been allowed to cloud her mind to the consequences of possible failure.

April glanced at her watch. It would be dusk in less than an hour. In half an hour Mark Slate, her U.N.C.L.E. associate who was sharing this Dutch assignment with her, would be along to take over the vigil.

For more than a week the watch had been kept on the old windmill, but so far all had gone well. A possible move from THRUSH, the counter-organisation, had not been forthcoming. In just two more days the mission would be over. April and Mark would return to U.N.C.L.E. headquarters and the windmill could look after itself once more.

The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. heard a soft movement outside her room and she moved over to the door.

"Okay, Mark. I'm coming," she called, just sufficiently loud for her associate to hear. She turned the key, twisted the knob and eased back the door.

Instantly she thrust it back again as the silenced gun plopped, and a bullet embedded itself in the thin matting a couple of feet to her right. She twisted the key back, but it was useless: the door was already being flung wider open. A broad-shouldered thug stood before her, but now disarmed—April's instant action having knocked the gun out of his hand. She kicked it out of reach as the thug advanced towards her. As he dived for her, she delayed her move until the very last fraction of a second. Then she twisted herself sideways and he careered into the wall.

From a jacket pocket she produced her miniature pistol and, as her adversary turned to advance on her again, she prodded it menacingly towards him.

"Hold it, brother," snapped April. "You stay right there."

For a moment the man's face was thunderous and he scowled at the Girl from U.N.C.L.E. Then his features relaxed and April detected a slight smile. Too late she realised. As she turned, a burly arm encircled her and a sweet-smelling pad was held to her face. The room spun uncontrollably, and she crumpled to the floor

ACT II

The old windmill had been an admirable concealment for the work of Professor Friedrichs. His advanced research sponsored by U.N.C.L.E. had been almost completed when his whereabouts had been detected by THRUSH. Under massive security he had been spirited away and, with blanket secrecy, had been installed in the old windmill. Inside, the crumpling building had been fully equipped with the most advanced laboratory equipment and the Professor had been able to continue his vital work.

April Dancer and Mark Slate had been assigned to the near-by village to keep watch. By day, they held the windmill under surveillance from the hotel window. By dark, they moved in closer, occupying in shifts a small observation post that had been dug out from a small incline and superbly camouflaged.

Friedrichs' work was vital, for THRUSH had developed a new drug which would enable them to obtain secret information from a captured U.N.C.L.E. agent within seconds. An instant brain-washer. The Professor had almost completed work on a successful antidote which would give immunity to U.N.C.L.E. agents.

But he needed peace and security for just a little longer to perfect his serum. In Holland, tucked away behind the unlikely exterior of the old windmill and chaperoned by April and Mark, he had found it. Until now . . .

ACT III

In a near-by room Mark Slate yawned himself awake, stretched and ran the palms of his hands over his face to freshen himself. He looked at his watch. "Okay, April love . . . I'm on my way."

He slipped on his shoes, donned his zip-fronted jacket, and stepped out on to the landing. He turned towards April's room, then flattened himself against the wall as he heard movements further along the landing. He eased his head out slightly and saw the two THRUSH agents, with an unconscious April bundled between them.

As they turned to go down the stairs, just a few yards in front of where Mark was concealed, his instinct was to pounce on them there and then. But he checked himself. Were there more THRUSH agents in the vicinity? Did they know about the Professor and where he was? Was this a carefully mounted campaign by THRUSH or had they, by chance perhaps, stumbled on to U.N.C.L.E.'s plan?

Mark decided he wanted to know more about these things before he showed his hand. So, as they bundled April down the stairs and into a waiting car, Mark followed.

The small-powered motor-cycle he had hired when he first came to the village was slow by comparison with the car in which April had been abducted, but the country was flat and the roads straight and he was able to keep the car in sight.

It was more than dusk now and Mark had the rear lights of the car to help his pursuit. He kept his own front light switched off, in case the THRUSH agents suspected they were being followed.

They travelled for about five miles, then pulled off the road and into a farmyard. Mark pulled up and dismounted, two hundred yards from the farmyard. He rested his motor-bike by a near-by tree and advanced on foot.

The *bleep bleep* of Mark's radio communicator pierced the quiet night air. "Slate here, sir."

"Mr. Slate!" pronounced Alexander Waverly. There was irritation in his voice. "Do try to make your reports on time. Now what is the position?"

"Not too good, I'm afraid, sir," revealed Mark. "April has been captured, but I'm close to the THRUSH agents who are responsible."

Waverly continued "Good work, Mr Slate. Miss Dancer's abduction is most unfortunate, but doubtless you know how to handle the situation. At all costs the Professor must be allowed to finish his work. Do you understand that, Mr. Slate?"

"Yes, sir, I understand."

Mark telescoped the unit and replaced it in his pocket. He moved nearer to the farmyard and, as he rounded a brick wall, the car came into view. It was but a few yards away and Mark could distinguish the form of April in the back seat, with one of the THRUSH agents seated by her side.

A small farmhouse was at the far end of the yard and, as Mark peered through the darkness, he saw the door open and, against the light from inside, identified the other THRUSH agent accompanied by none other than . . *Professor Friedrichs.*

The sight of the Professor shocked Mark and as a result he lost a couple of seconds. But as the two disappeared inside the car and the vehicle moved off, Mark raced after it and just managed to climb aboard, hanging perilously to the boot-handle while perching on the rear bumper. The car travelled in the direction of the old windmill and, over the rough track leading to it, Mark had great difficulty staying aboard the vehicle

The car shuddered to a halt and in the gloom the two THRUSH agents, the Professor and April now conscious again—got out and walked into the windmill.

Mark remained concealed until they had disappeared inside. Then he climbed off the car and approached the windmill. He shinned up the brickwork and looked inside through a slit in the wall. April was bound and helpless, though the Professor looked to be on good terms with the THRUSH couple

With odds of two and maybe three to one Mark knew he had to create some diversion. His first concern was to free April and then solve the Professor mystery.

A near-by scarecrow gave him an idea and he enlisted its aid. It was almost immediately in front of the old, thick door to the windmill, though about two hundred yards away. He stuffed a substantial amount of impact explosive into the scarecrow's ragged clothes, setting the self-detonating device for five minutes hence.

Then he took up station to the side of the door to the windmill, keeping well back to the wall. As the moments ticked by Mark had his plan worked out in his mind. First priority: to release April; then to deal with the Professor and the THRUSH pair.

There was a blinding flash; then . . . *C-r-u-n-c-h!* Pieces of the scarecrow flew in all directions and the giant explosion shattered the still night

The THRUSH reaction was immediate and, Mark was delighted to see, predictable. The heavy door was flung open and one of the THRUSH agents cautiously eased himself out through the opening to investigate the explosion.

Mark waited until he had exposed himself far enough, then with all his force—he flung himself forward, his hands outstretched They caught the agent across the middle of the back with such force that he went headlong. Such was the impact that Mark himself felt the recoil through his hands, arms and shoulders

But there was not a moment to lose. The element of surprise was vital.

Mark recovered his balance, sprang through the doorway and into the windmill. The second THRUSH agent was already advancing towards him, but Mark cleverly sidestepped the burly hand, as a clenched fist whistled past his cheek.

"*Ouch. . .*" Mark's fist sank deeply into the stomach of his adversary, and the burly thug collapsed to his knees. Mark wheeled round to deal with the now-recovered first agent.

He rushed at Mark with tremendous force, but U.N.C.L.E. training was supreme. Mark bent double at exactly the right second and the thug collapsed in a heap over the U.N.C.L.E. agent's back.

Mark took advantage of the momentary pause in the action. He sprang to April's side, cut through her bonds and left her with the knife so she could free her ankles.

"So kind," mused April, but Mark had no time to crack back. As he turned from April's side, a heavy piece of wood caught him on the shoulder and he staggered backwards. The THRUSH agent followed up his advantage and sprang at Mark, catching him with a good

judo hold, fingers pressing into the sides of the neck.

Instinctively Mark's hands came up together up and out with great force to break the hold, but now it was two to one. He was confronted by both THRUSH agents! One hit him heavily on the side of the head. Almost simultaneously his ribs burned with a second savage blow He staggered backwards, lost his balance and slithered to the floor.

His burly victors were pleased with their work. They looked at Mark with contempt, rolled him over with the ball of the foot, and then turned.

"I wouldn't advise you to move even half a step more, gentlemen," warned and scorned April.

The self-satisfied looks disappeared from the two faces as April prodded the miniature automatic menacingly towards them.

"She wouldn't da . . ." began the arrogant comment, but the phrase was never completed.

April's eyes glinted and she squeezed the trigger. A bullet kicked up dust not a couple of inches from the leg of the brash agent

"No . . .?" queried April, but it was the sort of question that answered itself.

The two THRUSH agents remained motionless.

Throughout the fracas, Professor Friedrichs had tucked himself away behind a bench, but as the excitement subsided he emerged and was now resuming his research as though nothing had happened.

"You're a cool one," said April to herself as she saw him start work again. Then there was a mighty explosion outside. April opened the door and saw the farmhouse a mass of flames.

There was a groan from the ground and Mark staggered to his feet. "What's that?" he inquired, somewhat vaguely.

"Don't worry," declared April. "It's all part of the plan."

ACT IV

"There's quite a lot I don't understand, as a matter of fact," said Mark Slate, a few hours later. He and April had returned to the village hotel.

"Such as . . .?"

"Such as the Professor! It looked to me as though he had switched sides, when I saw him come out of the farmhouse with the THRUSH agent."

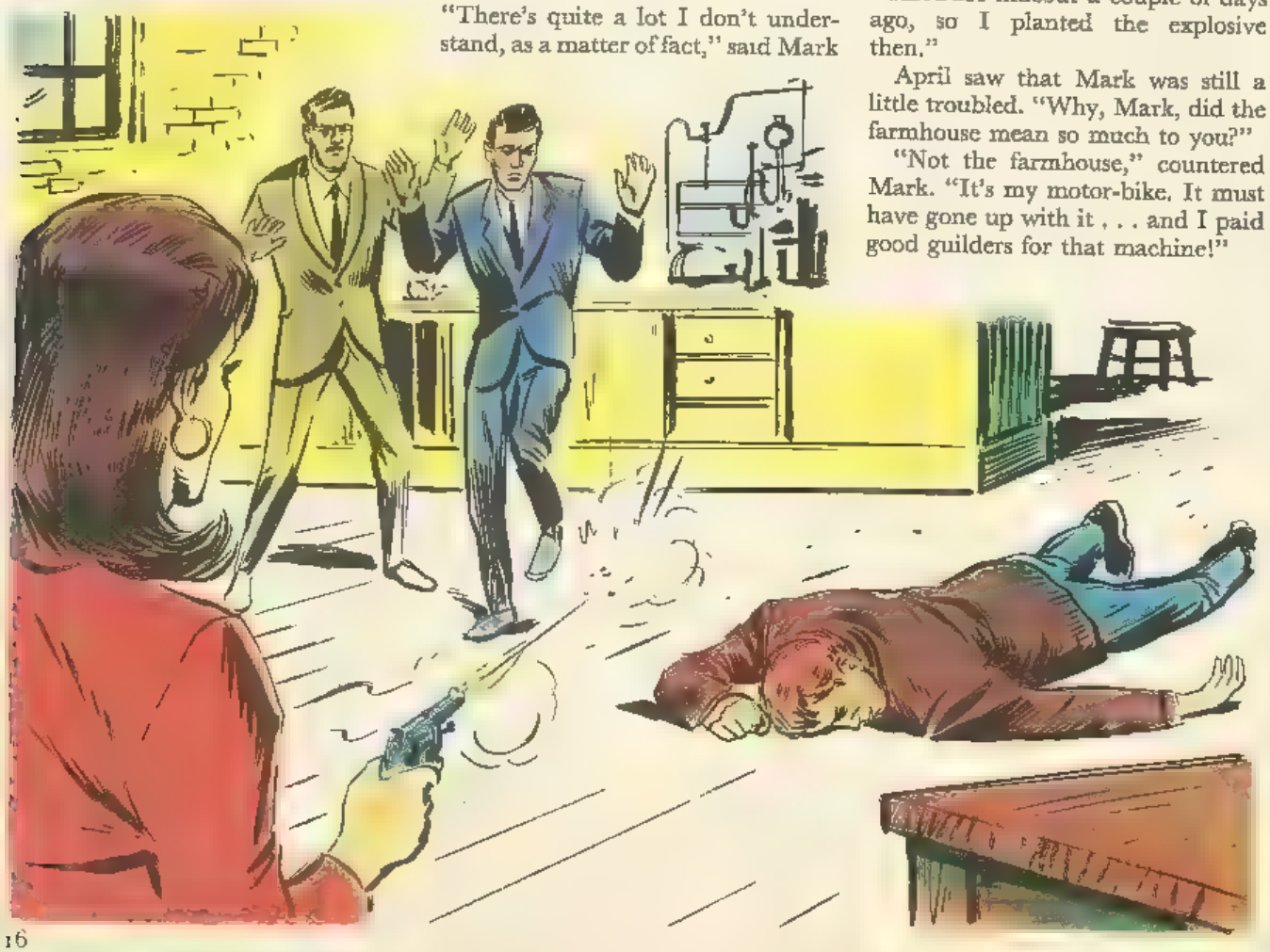
"Those were his instructions," explained April. "He had to give them the impression of going along with them or they might have destroyed the laboratory and all the work he had done so far. THRUSH's local organisation had been tipped off we were here, started looking into things and were lucky to discover, and recognise, the Professor when he made one of his few excursions from the windmill. They captured him, and he had to play along with them."

"And the farmhouse?" persisted Mark.

"Oh, that . . ." answered April, a little guiltily. "I must have forgotten to tell you. I discovered it was a THRUSH hideout a couple of days ago, so I planted the explosive then."

April saw that Mark was still a little troubled. "Why, Mark, did the farmhouse mean so much to you?"

"Not the farmhouse," countered Mark. "It's my motor-bike. It must have gone up with it . . . and I paid good guilders for that machine!"



COVER-UP STORY

Too busy crime-busting to spend much time and effort choosing clothes, April Dancer likes to look casually smart in chunky yet lightweight sweaters. The 'skinny' lines of this super cable sweater, with interest focused on the inset neckline, fits in well with April's versatile, globe-trotting wardrobe. You can knit one just like it to team with trouser suits, slacks and skirts.

Measurements
To fit 34–36 in. bust. Length 25¼ in. Sleeve seam 18 in. (adjustable).

Materials
11 2-oz. balls Patons Ariel Knitting; 1 pair each no. 8 and no. 5 knitting needles; 1 cable needle.

Tension
4½ sts and 5¾ rows to 1 sq. in. on no. 5 needles, measured over stocking stitch.
Important. Knit firmly throughout to the specified tension for Ariel. Loose knitting can cause stretching during washing. Do not dry clean.

Abbreviations
K, knit; P, purl; KB, knit into back of stitch; PB, purl into back of stitch; st, stitch; tog, together; inc, increase by working into front and back of st; dec, decrease by working 2 sts tog; beg, beginning; alt, alternate; rep, repeat; patt, pattern; in., inches; C2F, cable 2 front by working across next 4 sts as follows: slip next 2 sts on to cable needle and leave at front of work. Knit next 2 sts, then knit 2 sts from cable needle; C2B, cable 2 back as C2F, but leave sts at back of work; Tw2, twist 2 by knitting into front of 2nd st, then front of first st on left-hand needle and slipping 2 sts off needle tog.

Back
Using no. 8 needles, cast on 84 sts.
Work 4 rows in K1, P1 rib, inc 1 st at end of last row (85 sts).
Change to no. 5 needles and proceed in **wide rib patt** as follows:
1st Row. P3, * KB1, P5, rep from * to last 4 sts, KB1, P3.
2nd Row. K3, * PB1, K5, rep from * to last 4 sts, PB1, K3.
These 2 rows form the patt.
Continue in patt until work measures 17½ in. from beg.
Shape armholes by casting off 4 sts at beg of next 2 rows, then dec 1st at

both ends of next and every alt row until 67 sts remain. Continue on these sts until work measures 7½ in. from beg of armhole shaping.
Shape shoulders as follows:
1st and 2nd Rows. Cast off 10, work to end.
3rd and 4th Rows. Cast off 11, work to end.
Cast off.

Front
Using no. 8 needles, cast on 84 sts
Work 3 rows in K1, P1 rib.
Next row. Rib 1, (inc in next st, rib 9) 8 times, inc in next st, rib to end (93 sts).
Change to no. 5 needles and proceed in **wide rib and cable patt** as follows:
1st Row. P3, (KB1, P5) 4 times, Tw2, (P2, K4) twice, P2, Tw2, P3, Tw2, P2, (K4, P2) twice, Tw2, (P5, KB1) 4 times P3.
2nd Row. K3, (PB1, K5) 4 times, P2, (K2, P4) twice, K2, P2, K3, P2, K2, (P4, K2) twice, P2, (K5, PB1) 4 times, K3.
3rd and 4th Rows. As 1st and 2nd.
5th Row. P3, (KB1, P5) 4 times, Tw2, (P2, C2F) twice, P2, Tw2, P3, Tw2, P2, (C2B, P2) twice, Tw2, (P5, KB1) 4 times, P3.
6th Row. As 2nd row.
7th Row. As 1st row.
8th Row. K3 (PB1, K5) 4 times, P2, (K2, P4) twice, K2, P2, K3, P2, K2, (P4, K2) twice, P2, (K5, PB1) 4 times, K3.
These 8 rows form the patt
Continue in patt until work measures 16 in. from beg, finishing with *wrong* side facing for next row.
Divide for deep V as follows:
Next row. Patt 46, cast off 1, patt to end.
Proceed on first group of sts, dec 1st inside cable panel on next and every following 4th row as follows:
1st Row. Patt 25. P2 tog, patt 19.
2nd, 3rd and 4th Rows. Patt all across.
Continue dec in this manner on next and every following 4th row until work measures same as Back to armhole shaping, finishing with right side facing for next row.
Still dec inside cable panel on every 4th row as before, *at the same time shape armhole* by casting off 4 sts at beg of next row, then dec 1st at armhole edge on every alt row until 5 dec have been worked at armhole edge.
Continue dec inside cable panel **only** as before until **25** sts remain.
Continue on these sts until work measures same as Back to shoulder shaping, finishing at armhole edge.

Shape shoulder as follows:
1st Row. Cast off 12, work to end
2nd Row. Work all across.
Cast off
Rejoin wool to remaining group of sts at neck edge.
1st Row. Patt 19, P2 tog, patt 25
Complete to match First Half, reversing all shapings.

Sleeves
Using no. 8 needles, cast on 38 sts.
Work 7 rows in K1, P1 rib.
Next row. Rib 3, (inc in next st, rib 7) 4 times, inc in next st, rib to end (43 sts)
Change to no. 5 needles and proceed in wide rib patt as on Back, inc 1st at both ends of 3rd and every following 6th row until there are 71 sts.
Continue on these sts until work measures 18 in. from beg (adjust length here).
Shape top by casting off 4 sts at beg of next 2 rows, then dec 1st at both ends of next and every alt row until 53 sts remain. Cast off 10 sts at beg of next 4 rows.
Cast off.

To Make Up
With wrong side of work facing and omitting ribbing, press each piece **very lightly** using a **cool** iron and **dry** cloth.

Using a flat seam for ribbing and a fine back-stitch seam for remainder, join side and sleeve seams and stitch Sleeves into position. Press seams.

Inset (Back and Front both alike)
Using no. 5 needles, cast on 45 sts.
1st Row. K1, P3, * KB1, P5, rep from * to last 5 sts, KB1, P3, K1.
2nd Row. K4, * PB1, K5, rep from * to last 5 sts, PB1, K4.
These 2 rows form the patt.
Continue in patt until work measures 11 in. from beg, finishing at end of a 2nd row
Next 2 rows. Cast off 6, work to end.
Change to no. 8 needles and work 4 rows in stocking stitch, inc 1st at both ends of every row.
Cast off.

To Make Up
With wrong side of work facing press each piece **very lightly** using a **cool** iron and **dry** cloth.
Using a fine back-stitch seam, join shoulders of Back and Front.
Fold 4 rows of stocking stitch to inside to form neck facing and neaten ends. Press seams.

That Old April Charm

ACT I

THE adventurous career of U.N.C.L.E. agent April Dancer had taken the attractive, raven-haired girl to many corners of the world and into a variety of dangerous situations.

"But never one quite like this," April murmured to herself, pulling her fur-lined hood closer round her pretty head. The snow was deep and crisp. The wind chilled, in spite of the hooded and extra-warm donkey coat, the ski-weight trousers and the close-fitting, knee-high boots.

The bright lights of Montreal might only be a half-dozen miles away, but to the intrepid Girl from U.N.C.L.E.—at this precise moment they might well not have existed at all. The wood, though small, was dense, but as she tramped on through the snow the powerful beam of her miniature torch revealed a clearing some thirty yards ahead.

She moved on, almost to the clearing. Then she stopped behind the trunk of a tree. She swivelled the torch in her small palm, hoisting the beam until it picked out the edge of a large timber cabin. Deftly, the beam was swung higher and April allowed herself a self-satisfied *hmm* as she saw smoke curling from the chimney-pot.

"Looks like someone's home," she muttered to herself

She stepped back behind the trunk of the tree, thrust a trim hand inside her hip-length donkey coat and from a concealed pocket brought out her pencil-slim radio link unit

"Are you there, Mark?" inquired April.

"Here, April," came back the cultured voice of Mark Slate, April's harried helper on many U.N.C.L.E. missions.

"I've located the log cabin and it looks like Hartman's at home. There's smoke coming out of the chimney-pot."

"Looks like you're in for a cosy time, love," broke in Mark.

April ignored the humour. "Moving in now to complete the second part of the assignment," she announced. "I'll call you later, as arranged."

April telescoped the link unit to half size and returned it to her inside pocket. She pulled her coat more warmly on to her shoulders, settled the hood round her oval face, switched on her torch and stepped out from behind the tree

"Ah well," she murmured, "here I come, Mr. Hartman."

ACT II

Less than forty-eight hours earlier, April Dancer had been in the sophisticated New York headquarters of U.N.C.L.E., the world-wide

organisation dedicated to upholding law and order, chatting over a cup of coffee to Mark Slate. She'd sipped less than half of it when Alexander Waverly, the shrewd boss of U.N.C.L.E., strode in, followed by a white-sweatered, slim-skirted assistant.

"It's most remarkable," he announced with calm enthusiasm. Indeed, little disturbed the placid exterior of Mr. Waverly. "A most fortunate stroke of luck."

"What's that, sir?" inquired Mark Slate.

"Our monitoring system has just picked up, rather unexpectedly, a series of THRUSH radio messages which suggest that our old friend Lou Hartman is once more operating."

"Lou Hartman!" repeated Mark and April, almost simultaneously.

"Why, he hasn't been on the THRUSH scene since Puerto Rico," went on April.

"Exactly, Miss Dancer," confirmed Waverly "But we've been concerned of late, as you know, with increasing THRUSH activity in the Montreal area. These intercepted messages now seem to confirm that Hartman is organising things there and is operating from an inconspicuous timber cabin, just a few miles out of the city."

"You'd like us to go and investigate?" inquired Mark, moving out of his seat.

"Er . . . not you, Mr. Slate," announced Waverly.

April's eyes widened slightly as she raised an eyebrow by way of inquiry.

Confirmed Waverly: "Yes, Miss Dancer. I think this is an assignment which fits appropriately into your category. Hartman is an exceedingly good THRUSH agent, clever and dangerous, but his one weakness is feminine charm."

There was a moment's pause.

Then Waverly continued, dryly. "I think perhaps, Miss Dancer, that this is one quality which you have in greater abundance than, say, Mr Slate . . "

Out of the corner of her eye April saw Mark grinning She couldn't think of anything clever or funny to say in reply, so merely said—"Yes, sir!" She followed Mr. Waverly for her detailed briefing, but felt Mark's eyes focused on the back of her head. She looked back over her shoulder.

Mark was lounged back in his chair once more, sipping his coffee. As their eyes met, he smiled to her. "Try not to overdo the charm bit, love," he tantalised.

Again, to her self-annoyance she had no ready, witty answer, so she enjoyed some satisfaction by poking out the tip of her tongue in Mark's direction before disappearing through the door.

ACT III

A cover story was quickly worked out and arrangements made for April to supposedly stumble, quite by chance, upon Hartman's hideaway. Once there, she must draw on all her powers of perception and guile to find out what Hartman was doing She had her own plan worked out and, forty-eight hours later, as she walked up to the log cabin and banged on the door, she hastily went over it in her mind.

The sequence was interrupted as the door opened and framed, by the light from inside the cabin, stood Lou Hartman, a tall man, muscular, with a heavy black moustache making him look slightly older than his thirty-eight years.

The THRUSH agent looked surprised, and April began her speech. "I'm sorry to disturb you, but my car's broken down on the highway there and I wondered if you could help me?"

Hartman's eyes brightened at the attractive figure of April standing at his door

"Why . . sure . . ." he responded, somewhat surprised. "I'll be right with you . . . but, wait a minute. . . ."

There was a momentary pause, then: "You'd better come in while I get my coat and boots."

April smiled inside herself. He'd taken the bait. Her ruse was aimed primarily at getting inside the log cabin . . . and it had worked. So far so good.

The cabin was comfortably furnished and, as April flashed her eyes round the room, she detected nothing in any way unusual. A log fire crackled invitingly in the open grate and April moved towards it, pulling her coat closer round her

There was silence for a few

moments as April, quite genuinely, appreciated the warmth and welcome of the fire. Then she sensed Hartman's presence behind her. She turned and, seeing Hartman just a few feet away, put on her most attractive gaze.

Here goes, she said to herself. As the THRUSH agent came closer, April let the hood drop from her head, revealing her long, raven hair.

"You must be cold," said Hartman, taking her head between his hands. "Hmm . . . raven hair . . . and (looking into her eyes) lovely, brown eyes. . . ."

As Hartman moved nearer, April's hand closed more tightly round the knock-out pad in her jacket pocket. But as she made her move to bring the pad out and up into Hartman's face, the hands gripped her tightly, dropping from her head to her shoulders, so that her arms were pinned to her sides and immovable. For the moment April's chance of putting Hartman out for a few moments while she searched around the place was gone.

But as Hartman's face came closer April sensed that her plan also was going desperately wrong.

"Yes . . ." said Hartman, falteringly. "Yes, that's right. Beautiful raven hair . . . exquisite brown eyes . . . and . . . and" the voice took on a more sinister tone—"and if I'm not very much mistaken, U.N.C.L.E. agent No. 17225 . . . *Miss April Dancer*!"

April's eyes flashed as she realised she was in a trap. She attempted to free herself, but almost before she had begun to make the effort, Lou Hartman had flung her away from himself with such force that she staggered backwards, half-way across the room, and finally collapsed in an easy chair.

The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. sunk her right hand into the front pocket of her trousers, but, as she brought out her miniature automatic, a muscular hand encased her slim wrist and the gun spun away across the carpet.

"No, Miss Dancer," threatened Hartman through clenched teeth. "There'll be no tricks this time. You and I have a little time on our hands. We sit tight, you and me, here in this log cabin. And we wait. Wait for the arrival of your colleague, Mr. Mark Slate. Because you see, my clever Miss Dancer, this whole thing was staged . . . especially for U.N.C.L.E.'s benefit. But, I must say, I never believed you would fall for it so completely The sole object of our little deception was to capture April Dancer and Mark Slate. We have you, Miss Dancer, and it is just a matter of time before we have Mr. Slate, too."

April said nothing. Instead she thought what could possibly have gone wrong for U.N.C.L.E. to fall so innocently for such a trick.

ACT IV

There seemed to be no way of preventing Mark walking straight into the trap. Two hours had passed since Lou Hartman had exposed April's identity and now she was tightly bound to an upright chair, helpless.

Back in the supposedly broken-down car, Mark Slate was worried. He called Alexander Waverly.

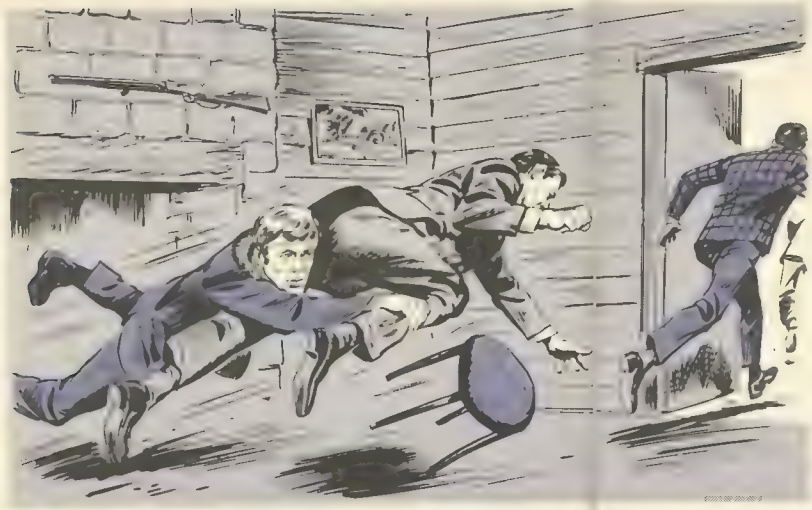
"What is it, Mr. Slate?"

"It's April, sir. She should have called half an hour ago, but I've heard nothing from her. I'm going up to investigate."

"Very well, Mr. Slate, but be careful. Our friend Hartman is no fool."

Mark, stiff with cold, eased himself out of the car and climbed up the shallow slope towards the small wood. He moved more quickly now, as the circulation came back to his limbs, but quietly, and he soon made the clearing in the centre of which stood the log cabin.

For the next ten minutes the U.N.C.L.E. agent carefully set about laying his "minefield". He moved



stealthily, and under cover of trees and foliage, from one tree to another. He left pads of self-detonating explosive attached to selected trees, concealed smoke capsules behind bushes. To a short stake in the ground he secured a machine-gun simulating device and, for good measure, left a couple of miniature smoke capsule projectile units close to the edge of the clearing

The small black haversack which Mark had brought with him from the car was virtually empty now and he flung it away beneath some bushes. He dusted down his hands by brushing them together, stood upright and checked the illuminated hands on his watch.

He seemed well satisfied.

Mark swiftly made his way round to the rear of the cabin, making sure to keep under cover of the trees. Although darkness gave a lot of cover, Mark knew it was folly to relax even fractionally the high standards to which he had been trained. He sprinted silently across the twenty open yards to the small rear window of the cabin. With a small device he took from his trouser pocket, the window catch eased back and he pushed up the window pane and clambed inside, head first

As the U.N.C.L.E agent tumbled through, rough hands grabbed him and hoisted him to his feet. A light snapped on and Mark could see three THRUSH agents—two held him while the other confronted him.

"Mr. Hartman will be delighted to see you," said the man facing Mark "You are expected."

Mark smiled faintly as he was hustled through and into the front lounge.

"Mark!" exclaimed April when she saw her associate.

"It's all right, love," assured Mark. "Not to worry."

Although the Girl from U.N.C.L.E. had been well trained to work independently and to be unaffected, psychologically, by the situation, she gained courage from Mark's presence and reciprocated the cheeky smile he tossed her way.

"Ah . . . Mr. Slate," announced Hartman, obviously well satisfied with the situation. "You, too, have walked straight into our little plot. Tut, tut I'm frankly surprised I thought U.N.C.L.E. would have been a little more suspicious about those radio messages . . . but I'm not complaining."

The lips twisted into a sneery smile, though April was more interested in Mark. His quick glance at his watch had not escaped her notice, and when he saw her looking at him, he nodded almost imperceptibly. Hartman, boastful in his attitude now, paced the room declaring how important THRUSH headquarters would now regard him, his idea for capturing April and Mark having been successfully completed.

April couldn't resist and as he paced in front of her chair once more, she stuck out both feet, gave them a little twist, and Hartman crashed heavily to the floor. He was furious. He scrambled to his feet and drew back his hand, ready to strike April a fierce slap on the fac

But the blow never landed. As he was about to deliver it, a tremendous din broke the silence of the night. Mark's "firework display" had started right on time; it couldn't have broken into the proceedings at a more opportune moment.

Alert to the situation, April didn't require Mark's exhortation, but it stung her into immediate action just the same.

As Mark shouted, *"Our move, April,"* and thrust himself away from his captors, April brought her trim feet into devastating action once more. She kicked them forward simultaneously and caught the unsuspecting Hartman beautifully in the small of the back. The impact pushed him forward and he staggered, off balance. At the same time April, reacting from the force of the well-timed blow, over-balanced, too, as the chair rocked back on its rear legs and then crashed to the ground

As the series of explosions rent the air and the *rat-a-tat* of the mock machine-guns prompted instant fear among the THRUSH gang, Mark acted. He took a heavy ornament from the nearby table and, with a well-aimed shot, shattered the light. The flickering fire gave some illumination and Mark could see April, helplessly strapped to the fallen chair.

"Come on, love," he called to her, cutting his knife deep into her bonds. "You've been strapped up there long enough."

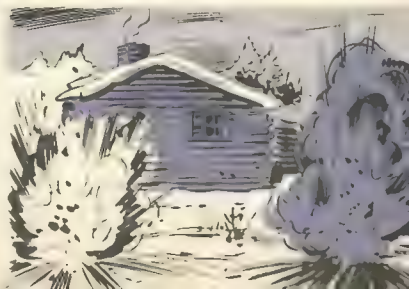
"Why, thank you, Mr. Slate," she countered, massaging her wrists.

But Mark had already left her side. The THRUSH gang had flown and, as Hartman was following his men through the back, Mark took a flying leap and brought him down in a superb tackle.

Around the isolated log cabin pandemonium now reigned To the explosions and gun noise was now added the *plop-plop* of smoke capsules as they dropped just short of the front porch.

Inside the cabin, Hartman regained his feet, struggled clear by kicking Mark in the chest and turned direction, racing for the front door. He'd got the door half open when he realised he would be escaping in the direction of all the noise. He faltered and April acted. She quickly unzipped her right boot, took it off her foot and aimed it at the outline of Hartman against the half-open door. It hit the THRUSH agent squarely on the back of the head and Hartman sank to his knees, dazed.

"Well kicked, April," called Mark through the gloom.



Hartman was beaten and as April prodded her small automatic into his ribs, he gave up the struggle.

They pushed him along in front of them as the three of them, April, Mark and Hartman, emerged from the front of the cabin. The noise had ended, though the night air was still heavy with the relics of the smoke capsules. "Back to the car, April, don't you think?" smiled Mark.

"I would say that would be the next move," agreed April.

But as they entered the wood on their way back to the road, a battery of torch-beams pierced the darkness and Waverly's voice came over the loud-hailer: "Are you all right, Miss Dancer? And you, Mr. Slate?"

The U.N.C.L.E. agents turned to each other and smiled through the darkness. "Over here, sir!" called back April.

There must have been fifty U.N.C.L.E. men with Waverly! Surprised, Mark declared: "I didn't realise you were following up behind, sir."

"But of course, Mr. Slate. You didn't think we would accept those intercepted radio messages just like that. It was all too easy. Oh yes, we suspected a trap right from the start, but of course we had to send you into the lion's den if we were to succeed in capturing Lou Hartman. That was *our* objective, in the same way that it was THRUSH's objective to capture both you and Miss Dancer."

"You mean they had no other aims, sir?" inquired a puzzled and somewhat proud Mark Slate.

"That's exactly what I mean, Mr. Slate I think we shall discover that Lou Hartman was the king-pin behind the additional THRUSH activity in this area, but I never did consider seriously that this log cabin could be his new headquarters. That is what made me suspicious in the first place, that and the radio messages. We picked them up too easily and the code was too simple.

"It was simply a trap to capture you and Miss Dancer, but of course we couldn't take a risk and I followed on with these men, just in case my theory was wrong and you had stumbled across a highly organised and well-manned THRUSH unit inside that log cabin."

There was a moment's pause. Then Waverly continued: "But you seem to have done all right without support." He turned in April's direction: "I expect it was your feminine charm which won the day," he declared.

April looked at Mark. Mark looked at April. The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. self-consciously looked again towards Mr. Waverly: "Er... I think, perhaps, sir, that he is less susceptible to feminine charm than he once was . . . *I hope.*"

The Twiggy Look

Top model Twiggy, blonde and beautiful, chooses four styles, created by Leonard, to enhance her gamin charm through twenty-four hectic hours of work and play.

For all these styles the cut is basic—it must be expertly done and constantly trimmed. Hair must also be kept soft and shining by constant shampooing —the new Polyherb shampoo by Poly is favoured by many models. Add to this a topknot of false hair for two of the styles and you have a portfolio of glamorous hairstyles.

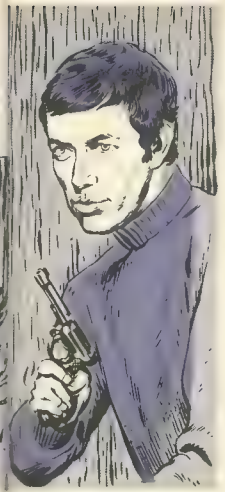
1 LITTLE LOST TWIGGY: This sweet and simple style gives Twiggy a little girl look, soft and appealing. Hair is parted at the side and brought forward from the crown into a deep fringe, which sweeps sideways to finish in a cute cheek curl. The rest of the hair is combed smoothly to hug the head.

2 ADD ONE TOPKNOT: Here the hair is parted on the other side, showing the clever cut. Note the angle from top of ear to a point of the cheek. A hairpiece is looped into large curls and fixed on top with grips and hairpins, transforming the simple daytime style into a party special.

3 SMOOTH AND FORMAL: Here again a hairpiece is used to give a long look at the side and extra height on top. The piece is divided and part is looped into loose curls on the crown, the rest falling at one side to finish in a chin-length cheek flip.

4 PEEK-A-BOO: This is in fact the basic style and it shows the perfect cut—layered skilfully into the nape of the neck and with the longer front section which gives the style adaptability, allowing it to be dressed differently.

THE CHINAMAN WHO WASN'T



ACT I

CHWANG LING owned the plainest, oldest Chinese restaurant in a town now thickly sprinkled with Chinese restaurants. From the ceiling of his long dining-room hung no gay lanterns. No bamboo blinds half-concealed the windows. Above the double, half-curtained doors that opened on to a dingy side-street no neon sign flashed enticingly. Against the brown-painted walls no mock blossoms sprayed from imitation Ming vases.

Rather were the walls hung with framed, fading photographs of old Chinese Nationalists, not because Chwang Ling was himself a Nationalist, or indeed anything politically, but because the restaurant had been started and handed down to him by his uncle, and Chwang Ling in honour of his illustrious memory, would alter nothing.

On thick white plates were served at the cheapest prices the largest helpings of most excellently cooked Chinese food. Here, and not to the new restaurants, flocked the gourmets and local Chinese. Here, at varying intervals, had come Mark Slate, which was why he came to be mixed up, despite Mr. Waverly's instructions, in the Death Creeper Affair.

Chwang Ling himself lived above the restaurant in a room which he kept scrupulously neat, almost impersonal. It contained a large photograph of his uncle, a transistor radio, and a telephone. Even so on this particular night he preferred to make *this* call from a public box two street corners away.

Mr. Slate, he reasoned, with a widening of his perpetual smile, would be very surprised. The fact that he had been in the town three days and not yet eaten at the restaurant suggested he did not wish his presence known. However, the bait Chwang Ling was about to dangle was, he was sure, irresistible. It had been worth while following Mr. Slate, after that first glimpse of him darting from the railway station with a pretty, dark-haired girl in a cap

Mark Slate positively yelped Chwang Ling's name back at him over the line

"Very pleased, Mr. Slate, to have you back in England."

"How, for Pete's sake, did you know . . . ?"

Chwang Ling enjoyed a low, much-satisfied chuckle. Then to business: "I think maybe, Mr. Slate, I have something that interest you."

"Now, look, Chwang. . . ."

"Something which certainly intrigue me. You listen? Every night for week now, man come to my restaurant, always alone. Look Chinese, speak Chinese, have much knowledge of Chinese people, customs, history. . . . Say he from Hong Kong. But Chwang Ling certain he *not* Chinese."

Mark's interest was hooked . . . despite himself, despite Mr. Waverly's instructions.

"I like you to see him," Chwang Ling continued. "Like to hear your opinion."

"Chwang for certain important, undivulgeable reasons I can't."

"You bring young lady for supper tonight—in one hour—yes? I have Tien prepare your favourite Eggs Foo Yung with hot soy sauce. Yes?"

Chwang Ling's smile deepened at the long sigh which slid into his ear, and told of Mr. Slate's struggle between desire and instructions.

"All right, Chwang. Miss Dancer and I will be there about eleven."

"Very good. I point out man to you. I think you find him worth watching. Little scars about eyes most interesting."

Chwang Ling replaced the receiver with the satisfied smile of a man pleasing both himself and a dear friend.

The smile was still upon his face as he turned and pushed his way out on to the street, geographically the continuation of the main shopping street, but lacking its name, its big stores, and its lights

The pavement was not crowded for neither cinemas nor bingo halls had yet begun to discharge their patrons. Nor was it so empty that Chwang Ling was particularly aware of the figure treading his shadow

ACT II

Mr. Waverly's instructions back in New York headquarters had been implicit.

"You will act inconspicuously. Book into a quiet hotel; not go out much. Buy a second-hand car whose engine belies its ordinary appearance, and fit it with the necessary U.N.C.L.E. gadgets yourselves. *Nothing* must associate you with U.N.C.L.E. Trouble with the police, however trivial, a shot of publicity, would ruin, I can truthfully say, years of work. When I am sure, *I* shall contact *you*."

"And you have to be recognised by your old friend, Chwang Ling!" exclaimed April Dancer.

"Hardly *my* fault. Mr. Waverly chose this town," said Mark reasonably. "Anyway we have to eat supper, and it would make a refreshing change not to grind the fillings out of our teeth with stone-age biscuits in the hotel lounge."

April shot him an exasperated look. "You know it's not for Eggs Foo Yung you are going to Chwang Ling's restaurant! Mark, you must *not* get involved with this Chinaman who Chwang thinks isn't a Chinaman "

"Well you don't have to come!"

April's chin went up mutinously. "A jolly time I'd have explaining to Mr. Waverly how you disappeared into thin air or how your jacket came to be found floating spread-eagled on the Thames."

"We are nowhere near the Thames."

April rammed on her cap. "I'm coming!"

Mark drove into the town centre, via the Civic Gardens, in the deceptively ordinary car they had chosen. a dull red Mevis with a plastic-covered luggage rack fitted on the roof. The plastic sheeting concealed an essential item of equipment which couldn't be satisfactorily fixed anywhere else.

April, glancing back for a second glimpse of the coloured fountain playing before the illumined front of the Rotunda Concert Hall, saw into the car behind, and gasped:

"What on earth is that?"

Mark looked up into his driving-mirror. "You know, a dummy male passenger "

"Looks more like something out of a horror film to me "

Mark grinned. "You must have *heard* of them at least. Lots of nervous girls drive around with them."

April stole a second incredulous glance when they had to stop at the traffic lights. "Who does that dizzy ginger-nut expect to fool?"

"Dishy," Mark corrected her.

"Just makes her feel safer, I suppose."

"If she's that nervous," opined April, as they parked directly behind the girl a few darkened shop windows beyond Chwang Ling's restaurant, "she ought to stay home evenings."

The girl was fumblingly locking her driving door. With a nervous glance round and a nervous half-smile at them, she hurried past and into the restaurant.

Unashamedly intrigued, April went to have a closer look at the full-size dummy. "I suppose the monster's deflatable?"

"Umm."

April shook her head. "She'd have done better to have spent her money on Judo lessons."

The restaurant was practically full, and they had to take the two empty seats opposite the auburn-haired beauty at a table just vacated by four slender Chinese youths.

The waiter who came hurrying up for their order exclaimed in surprise, but with much pleasure: "Why, Mr. Slate! You long-time stranger. What you have? Eggs Foo Yung, yes?"

"Obviously Chwang Ling forgot to tell his staff his illustrious friend was coming," whispered April.

Mark was looking worried.

"Mr. Ling around, Tchang?"

The waiter turned from assisting the girl, who was in a state of pathetic helplessness over the menu.

"Not at moment, Mr. Slate. He be most pleased to see you again. Most surprised. He often talk about your advent. . . ."

"Only a half portion of Chicken Curry," interrupted April desperately. Any moment now the whole restaurant would know they worked for U.N.C.L.E. "Where is Mr. Ling?"

"He go out 'bout one hour ago. Probably stopped to see friend. He be back by time you finished meal."

For the first time ever Mark did not enjoy his Eggs Foo Yung; if they had any taste, he did not notice. Having gulped the meal down, he followed Tchang through the curtained alcove at the end of the restaurant and went quietly up the stairs to Chwang's room. The door was unlocked. Everything within neat.

ACT III

"Well?" April looked up inquiringly as he slipped back on to his chair.

"Nothing."

"Just as well," said April. "Come on."

Mark stared up and down the street while the auburn-haired girl, who had left a moment before them, was making a mess of starting her car.

"I don't understand," said Mark. "Chwang wouldn't have phoned for nothing."

"He'll phone you again no doubt," said April, relieved the supper had not been the start of a wild, and forbidden, adventure. "Anyway I didn't notice any Chinaman in there with little scars about his eyes."

Mark kept his Mevis crawling painfully behind the grey car containing the dummy passenger, wishing the girl would either give him room to pass, or make up her mind what speed she wanted to drive at.

"Personally I think the dummy'd drive better," he gritted, clamping on his brake as again the girl abruptly slowed down.

Whoops! Without warning the girl swooped round the corner at a wide angle.

"Thank goodness!" Mark prepared to drive on, but suddenly April was clutching the edge of her seat. "No, follow her!"

"What?"

"Don't lose her. There's two things those dummies can't do," she said tensely. "They don't deceive anybody they're real, and they don't put up a hand to steady themselves when a car lurches round a corner. Somebody is inside that suit, Mark."

"Chwang?"

"Could be," said April.

Indeed it might very well be something grimmer than a mere seat-belt holding the dummy passenger stiffly erect. If it had not been for that one instinctive, betraying movement of the hand. . . .

Had Chwang been kidnapped before he could point out to them the Chinaman-who-wasn't, they wondered?

The girl, having obviously realised their suspicions were roused, was driving expertly now, overshooting traffic lights and sweeping on along the main road at a rate that within minutes would have her past the boundary pillars and between dark hedges.

Grimly Mark eradicated the oft-times unavoidable distance between them; clung, despite every twist at a signpost's finger, to the purposefully erratic tail-light.

The girl had fooled them with her nervousness, her fumbling . . . but if she had harmless, likeable Chwang Ling incarcerated inside that dummy. . . . And with what end in view?

As they switchbacked a dangerous Z-bend, April desperately hoped Mr. Waverly wasn't choosing that moment to try to contact them back at the hotel.

"U.N.C.L.E. to the rescue," exclaimed Mark, swinging out to overtake.

April did not have time to comment. For at that moment the dummy thrust its head out of the side window, and put four accurate shots into the Mevis's front tyres.

Hissing its surprise, the car reared and nosed drunkenly sideways into a ditch. There was a crash as the luggage rack hit the grass in a tangle of plastic sheeting.

"Just whose side is your precious Chwang on?" demanded April, climbing over the steering-wheel

Mark glared bewilderedly after the mocking tail-light.

"Hey!" April flapped a corner of the sheeting at him. "Care to give a hand, Mr. Slate? Strapped to that rack is a delicate piece of equipment we were ordered to take great care of. Remember?"

In savage self-disgust, Mark yanked the entire sheet clear. Dry tongues clove to suddenly dry mouth-roofs. The piece of U.N.C.L.E equipment had gone! In its place was the bound, and quite dead body of Chwang Ling.

ACT IV

Tropical jungle domed and pricked by the darting flashes of fireflies a mere few hundred yards from the Ebbingdon-Dover road: the one private indulgence of Nathan Coll, who owned the spider-sprawl of experimental nurseries beyond the high clipped hedge of his Georgian home.

Nathan Coll himself now angrily poured Cointreau into three glasses in his red leather-walled study.

"You fools!" The moist lips within the brown beard quivered.

"Don't you realise the district could already be crawling with policemen?"

"Should we have allowed them to follow us here?" snapped the voice muffled inside the dummy's head. "Please to help me out of this suffocating horror."

"Had they followed you, *we* could have dealt with them. Instead there they are, stranded for the first passing police car to discover and with a dead body and bullets in their tyres to prove their story.

"And *why* was there a dead body?" he demanded.

"The Chinaman—Chwang Ling—had become suspicious."

"Who you were?" Nathan Coll stared incredulously.

"What I was not."

"He knew you for a European?" For a moment Nathan Coll's tremendous self-belief tottered.

"He knew me not to be a Chinaman. I had seen him staring, staring. . . . It was fortunate I followed his movements this evening. They were not just a couple of his friends following us, but U.N.C.L.E. agents."

The brown-bearded man started. "And you. . . . With what you know has to be done tonight?"

"Did you wish what I carry should fall into *their* hands?"

The man stepped clear of the dummy exterior, identical to, but *not*, the deflatable suit that had first occupied the girl's passenger seat; that still lay hidden in the car. The man was slight, ageing, slit-eyed, his cheeks hairless, but although there could be, there was nothing of the Chinaman in his voice or manner now.

"Every few years a new face. A new tongue mastered; a new personality assumed, but never safe," he hissed. "Never for a moment. No peace."

Nathan Coll might have retorted: we reap what nightmares we sow; but he did not. His own seeds, the bitter, satisfying seeds of vengeance, had taken long to germinate and grow. Now was the time for being particularly careful. You might assist a man to change his body, but even THRUSH had not wanted this man's devilishly creative mind, nor his instincts, changed

"Fydel and Nort could help," put in the girl.

Nathan Coll nodded. "Tell them to get those U.N.C.L.E. agents and bring them back here. Also the Chinaman's body. We are well prepared for dealing with corpses tonight."

The Chinaman-who-wasn't looked startled

"Thanks to your genius, dear Ulys . . . dear P'u Chan." Nathan Coll lifted his glass, but dared not yet do it mockingly.

ACT V

Mark was flat on his back on the verge, with the front of the Mevis jacked up, fitting a new tyre, when he heard a car approaching. Wheels crunched to a stop on the loose grit

For a second Mark froze. If this was the police. . . .

There was a double slam of doors, a voice cheerily demanding if they needed help.

He heard the frantic rustling of plastic as April endeavoured to cover the body she had been loosening from the rack, the crackle of frosty grass spikes under heavy feet, then April's cry.

And as he made to wriggle out, the revolver-butt pressed cold and hard between his eyebrows. A hand sought successfully for his own revolver. A voice, no longer cheery, ordered him to get up, and no funny business, or. .

The man leapt up, threatening him straddle-legged from behind. Mark humped himself back on his elbows as if preparing to rise, kicked his feet up sharply under the man's chin and kicked again before the astounded man had the sense to move away

As Mark bounded up, he was aware of the man's companion finishing a series of mid-air spins before collapsing in a heap. April swiftly stooped for his revolver.

Over and over, Mark and *his* assailant rolled, achieving a tumbling act that no amount of rehearsing would have bettered, while April darted alongside them helplessly unable to distinguish, for a long enough time to pull the trigger, one wheeling body from the other. The two men parted as violently as they had come together; the man sprawled against the hedge; Mark accomplished a neat and final back somersault

"Catch!"

April meant to toss him a revolver and failed for an understandable reason. Even Mark's cry did not enable her to duck completely the length of piping which her own, no longer inert, assailant brought down on her head. And Mark just wasn't prepared to go on fighting with the man's revolver in April's ear

While the man ordered Mark into the front seat, and thrust April into the back alongside him, the big blond he called Nort flung Chwang Ling's body into the boot.

"Nasty accident somebody had there!" Nort jibed, as he drove away from the stranded Mevis

ACT VI

In the domed jungle, with night banished by artificial sunlight, the heat was suffocating; the path, upon which the wrist-bound U.N.C.L.E agents were being held by Nort and Fydel, was faintly steaming

Mark gazed up through a profilicacy of orchids and pitcher plants to the steel platform where the bearded Nathan Coll, the girl and the fake Chinaman were watching them.

"First the dead Chinaman," ordered Nathan Coll, levelling his revolver as Nort let go of Mark to tie the stiff body of Chwang Ling to the trunk of a near-by tree. The girl, at a nod from Coll, ran down one of the silver spirals of stairway to help him.

"Now him." Coll jerked his revolver at Mark, and Mark, knowing the slightest struggle on his part would mean April's immediate death, submitted.

The girl! April weighed her chance, and realised she hadn't one—yet.

"Human sacrifice your hobby?" demanded Mark, as the last knot was tied

"I suppose you could call it sacrifice," admitted Nathan Coll. "Sacrifice to the god Science, eh Ulys . . . F'u Chan?"

The fake Chinaman was tapping lean fingers impatiently on the rail.

"My friend, Mr. Chan, has long been engaged in both pursuits: science and human sacrifice."

"Let your wit rest," burst out his companion.

"Oh, but you must acknowledge

your achievements. *They* are going to die; they cannot tell. First there were the prisoners in the camp. . . ."

"Shut up!" rapped the Chinaman, every nerve in his face a quivering cord of fear

"Let me confide in you further," smiled Nathan Coll. "Mr. Chan has perfected yet another secret weapon. It can be sold to any interested government by an organisation we all know well. Guaranteed to wipe out an army in the jungle, a whole town even, an airfield within hours. If necessary a country

"How?" he bantered "Well doubtless you have heard of Instant Grass; slow-growing stuff compared with Mr. Chan's Instant Creeper. A swift, suffocating growth, and the only thing that can kill it, is itself lethal to any form of life. So there is no antidote. Correct, Mr. Chan?"

The Chinaman-who-wasn't nodded. "Get on with the experiment. THRUSH want your report tonight."

"Naughty of them not to trust your own photographs," said Nathan Coll. "Somebody must have suggested to them that you might be faking."

The Chinaman looked surprised.

Coll beckoned Nort and Fydel back up the steps

"You know the procedure. *I* shall pull the lever that will rain in that area the Instant Creeper fluid instead of water."

April and Mark tried to move their hands. Not a hope!

A sudden cry from the platform made them look up. Struggling in the grip of Nort and Fydel was the Chinaman-who-wasn't

"Oh come, dear Ulys, you do not object to you yourself being a sacrifice?" sneered Coll, as his assistants hauled the man down the steps and began to tie him, too, to a tree

"Why do you do this? What fool's trick? What joke?"

"No joke, dear Ulys. For twenty-four years I have waited for you to invent a death as satisfying as this. I want you to experience every delicious moment."

"But why?" The man's voice was a yelp of incredulity "You have been my friend. Helped me."

"How else could I have prevented you slipping through *my* fingers as you slipped through everyone else's?"

"Ulys Polsch," said Mark.

"Yes, Mr. Slate, the Beast of Hulzner," said Coll. "And do you know, Mr. Slate, he did not have to do what he did. He volunteered. *He* suggested the experiments; chose his victims . . . and among them was my son. For nearly a quarter of a century he has sweated in fear; now he is to die by one of his own experiments, and I can watch him."

"No!" Polsch was gaping with terror.

Coll turned to make his way to the panel containing the weather levers. "You can shoot the two U N C.L.E. agents," he instructed Nort. "I don't want Ulys to have the comfort of companionship."

Mark looked at April and both dropped their heads; both withdrew the hollow pins from the tips of their jacket lapels with their teeth

Keeping a firm hold of the minute tube with his lips, Mark sent a tiny dart at the descending Coll. The bearded man crashed to the bottom of the steps and was still.

The girl, Nort and Fydel turned to stare incredulously. The girl rushed forward. April sent *her* dart into Nort as his hand went uncertainly to his revolver.

When he fell the girl gave a scream, and Fydel, perhaps connecting the fallen figures with some unknown effect of the spray, lost his head and rushed for the exit panel of the conservatory.

"Wait!" shouted the girl. Her gun spat her contempt for his cowardice.

Then suddenly the gun was on the ground and the girl writhing in the arms of a tall, grey-coated man. His companion surveyed the bound figures with gravely inquiring eyes.

"Mr. Waverly!" gasped April.

ACT VII

"I hardly expected to arrive at your hotel with instructions and immediately have to rush off in search of you," reproved Mr. Waverly on his return to U.N.C.L.E. headquarters, London.

"I hope what happened, what we did, doesn't—hasn't—interfered with what you sent us over here for, sir?" blurted Mark. "Of course we had no idea Chwang's Chinaman-who-wasn't was the butcher Ulys Polsch."

"Neither had we," rejoined Mr. Waverly.

"You mean we were sent to England to—to . . . ?" For once amazement conquered April's collected coolness.

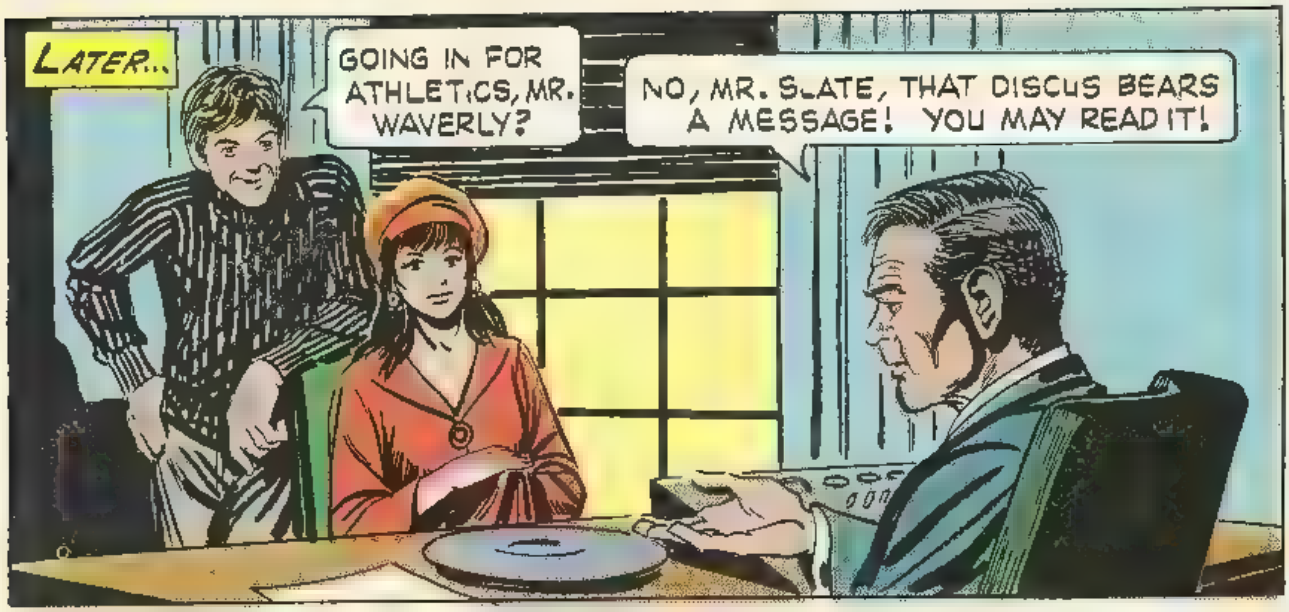
"To capture Polsch as soon as we were sure which of Coll's acquaintances he was. Very difficult when a man changes his identity so often."

"A couple more hours and he'd have been a mass of luxuriant creeper," said Mark.

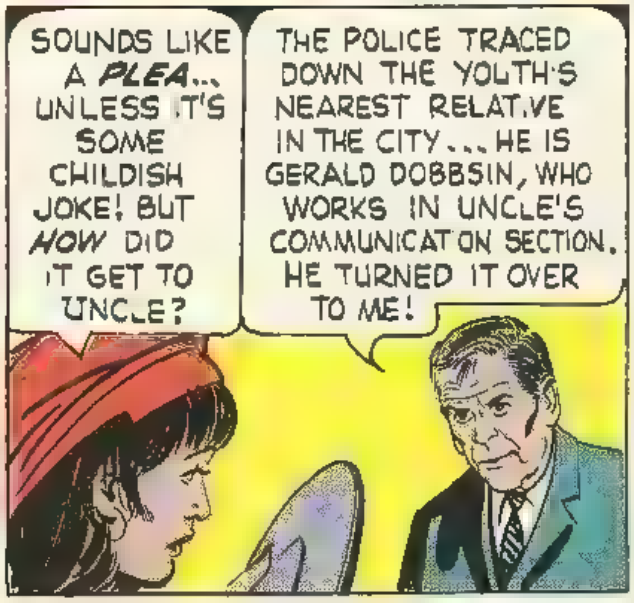
"That I realise, Mr Slate And so, I fear, would you and Miss Dancer. Despite your disobedience, I have a distinct repugnance to my agents being turned into botanical specimens."

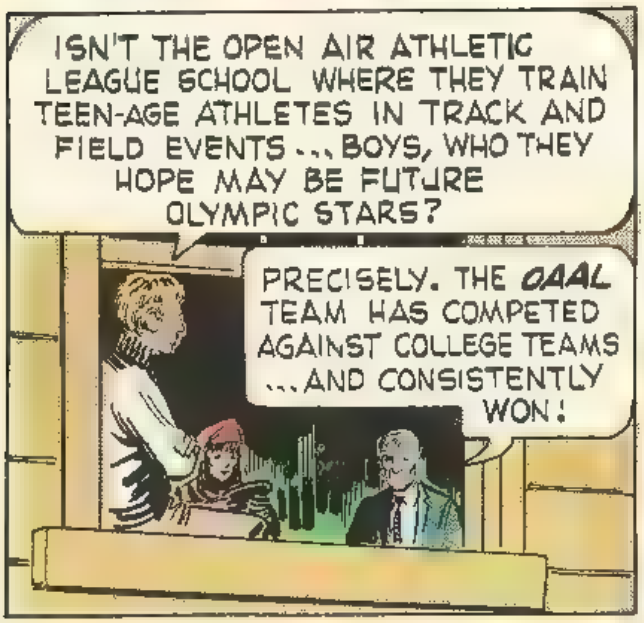
"So have I," agreed Mark fervently

THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E.
THE KID COMMANDOS' CAPER
PART 1
The WARNING MESSAGE
AS A PLEASURE BOAT CRUISES DOWN THE HUDSON, CLOSE TO ITS TOWERING CLIFFS, THERE IS A WHIRRING SOUND IN THE AIR AND SUDDENLY...
W-WHAT WAS THAT?
THUMP!
GREAT SCOTT! IT'S A DISCUS! MUST'VE BEEN HEAVED FROM THE CLIFF UP THERE!... SAY! THERE'S A MESSAGE CARVED ON IT.
A MESSAGE! WHAT DOES IT SAY?
HEAD FOR THE YACHT BASIN! THIS MESSAGE IS FOR THE POLICE!

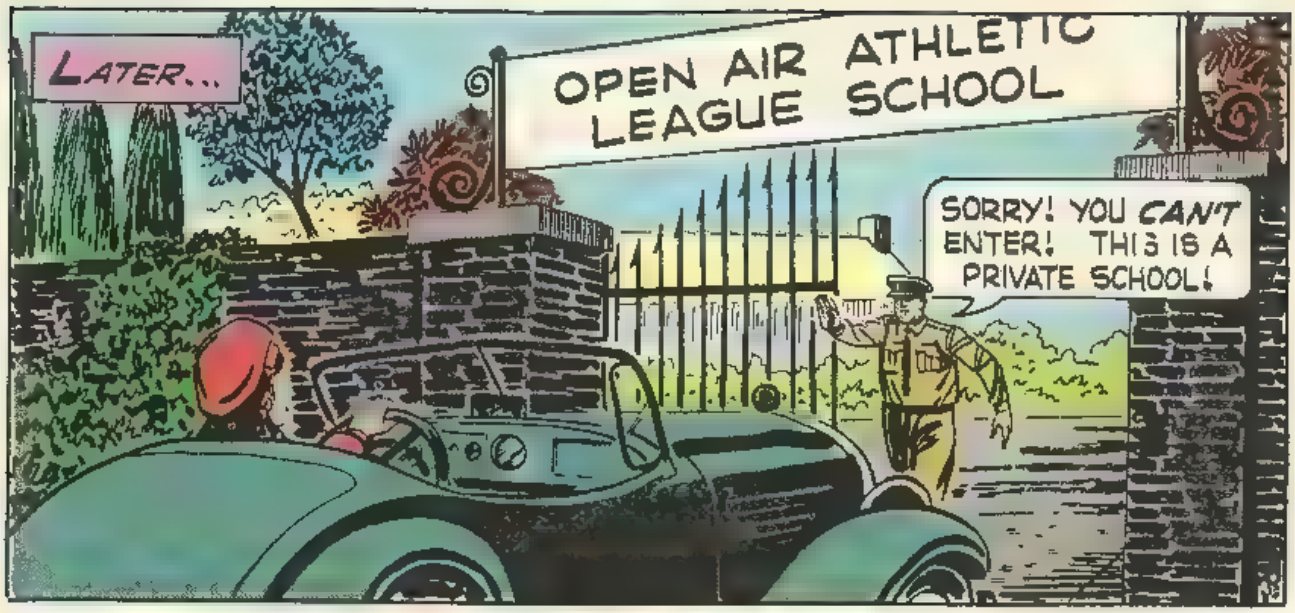

LATER...
GOING IN FOR ATHLETICS, MR. WAVERLY?
NO, MR. SLATE, THAT DISCUS BEARS A MESSAGE! YOU MAY READ IT!

"GET ME OUT OF THE OPEN AIR ATHLETIC LEAGUE SCHOOL! IT IS A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH! PETER HENRY DOBBSIN."


SOUNDS LIKE A PLEA... UNLESS IT'S SOME CHILDISH JOKE! BUT HOW DID IT GET TO UNCLE?
THE POLICE TRACED DOWN THE YOUTH'S NEAREST RELATIVE IN THE CITY... HE IS GERALD DOBBSIN, WHO WORKS IN UNCLE'S COMMUNICATION SECTION. HE TURNED IT OVER TO ME!


ISN'T THE OPEN AIR ATHLETIC LEAGUE SCHOOL WHERE THEY TRAIN TEEN-AGE ATHLETES IN TRACK AND FIELD EVENTS... BOYS, WHO THEY HOPE MAY BE FUTURE OLYMPIC STARS?
PRECISELY. THE OAAL TEAM HAS COMPETED AGAINST COLLEGE TEAMS ...AND CONSISTENTLY WON!

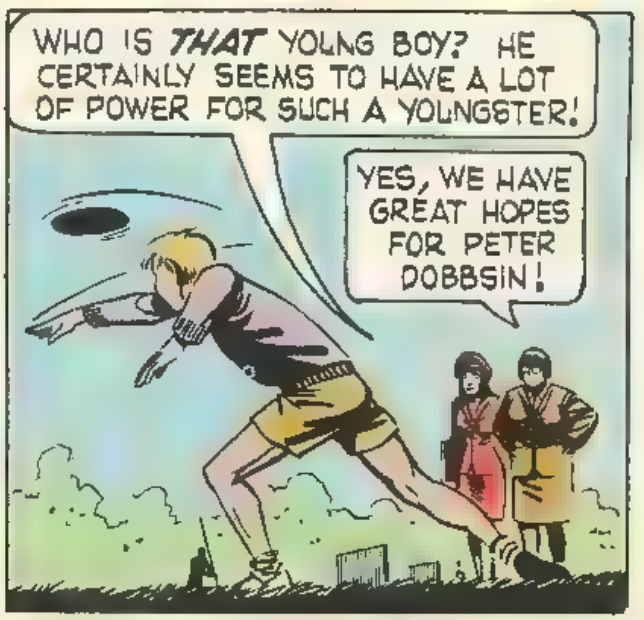
I HAVE REASONS TO WISH THIS CHECKED OUT! MISS DANCER, THE BEST COVER WILL BE FOR A WOMAN TO GO THERE... AS A REPORTER! I'LL REQUEST DOCUMENTS TO GIVE YOU THE CORRECT CREDENTIALS AT ONCE!
I WONDER WHAT FRIGHTENED THAT YOUNG MAN?


LATER...
OPEN AIR ATHLETIC LEAGUE SCHOOL
SORRY! YOU CAN'T ENTER! THIS IS A PRIVATE SCHOOL!

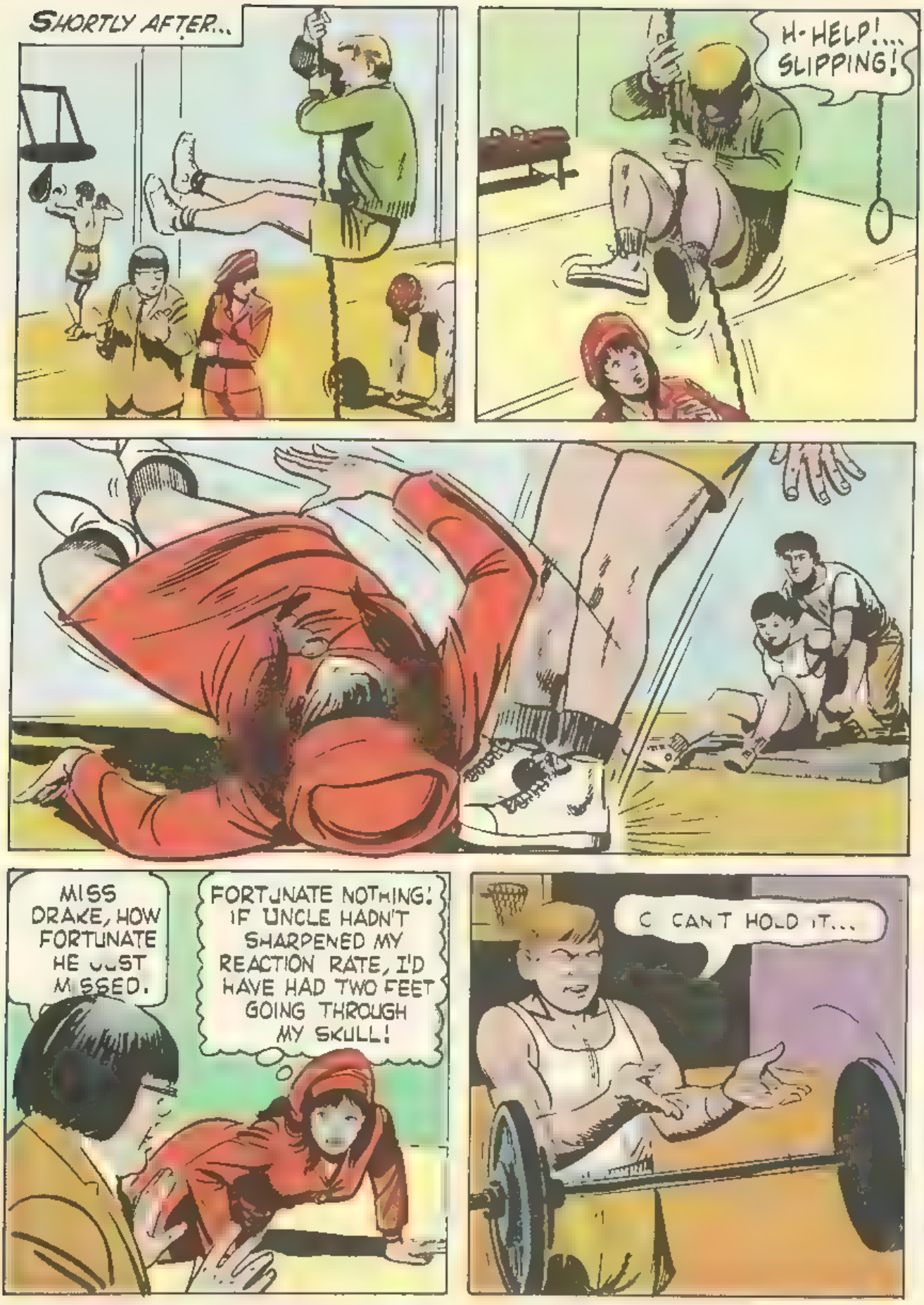
I UNDERSTAND! BUT I'M A REPORTER FROM THIS MID-WESTERN NEWSPAPER SYNDICATE! WE WANT TO DO A STORY ON YOUR BOY CHAMPIONS!
HMM! BETTER CALL MISS HARSHLY!

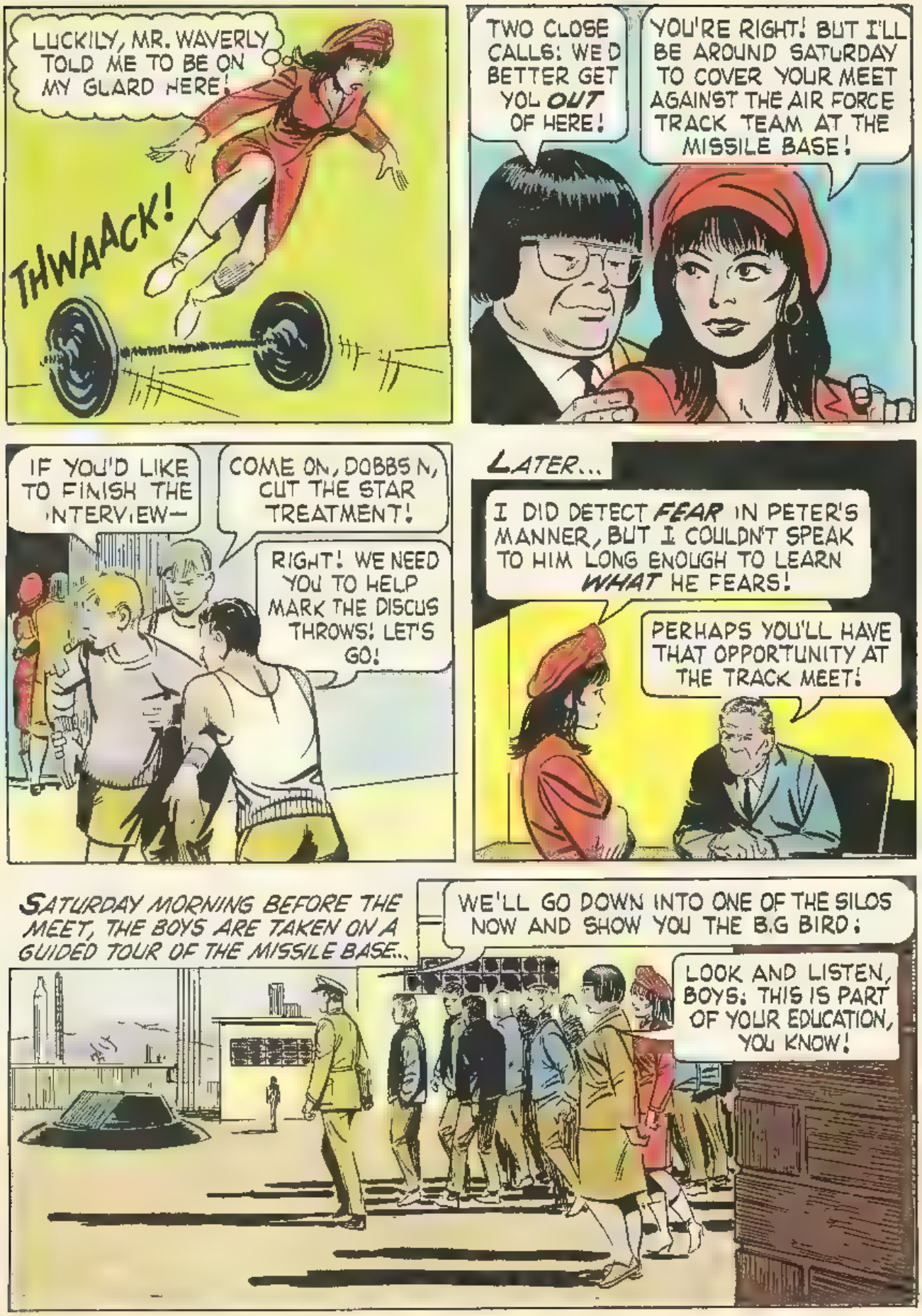
MISS HARSHLY, I'M AGNES DRAKE, A REPORTER!
PRECISELY WHAT WE DON'T WANT! HOWEVER, YOU ARE HERE, SO I'LL GIVE YOU A QUICK TOUR AND THEN YOU CAN GO ON!

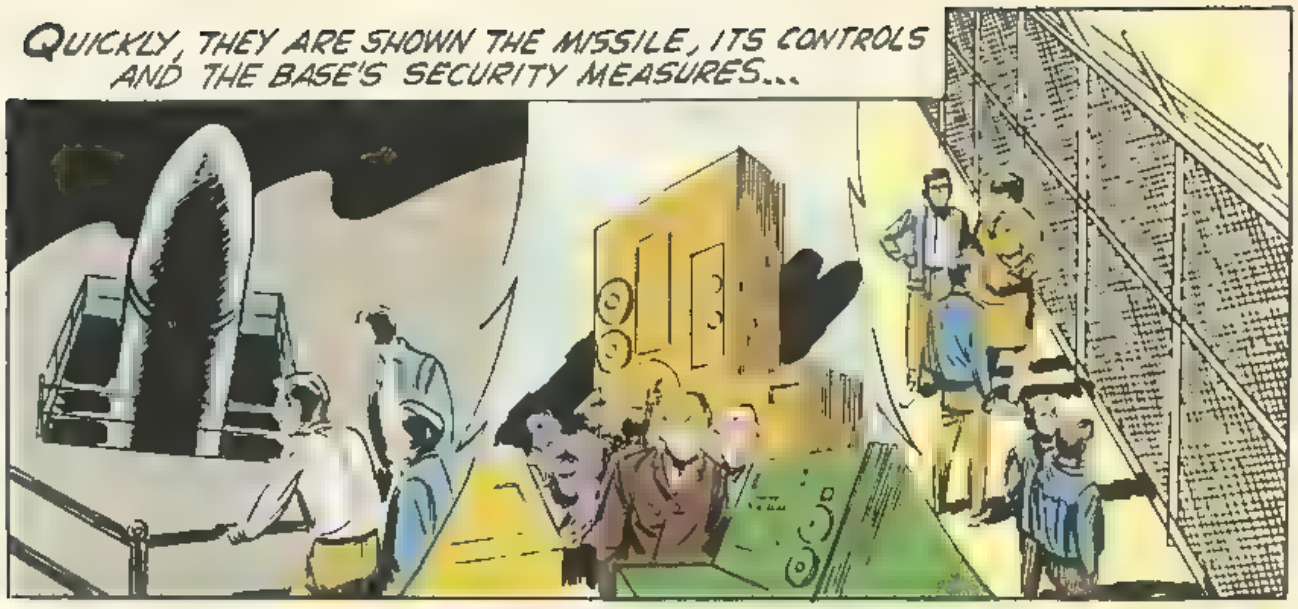
MINUTES LATER...
OUR BOYS COME TO US AT THIRTEEN AND BY THE TIME THEY ARE READY FOR COLLEGE, WE HOPE THEY ARE ALSO READY FOR THE OLYMPICS!
THIS WILL FASCINATE OUR READERS!

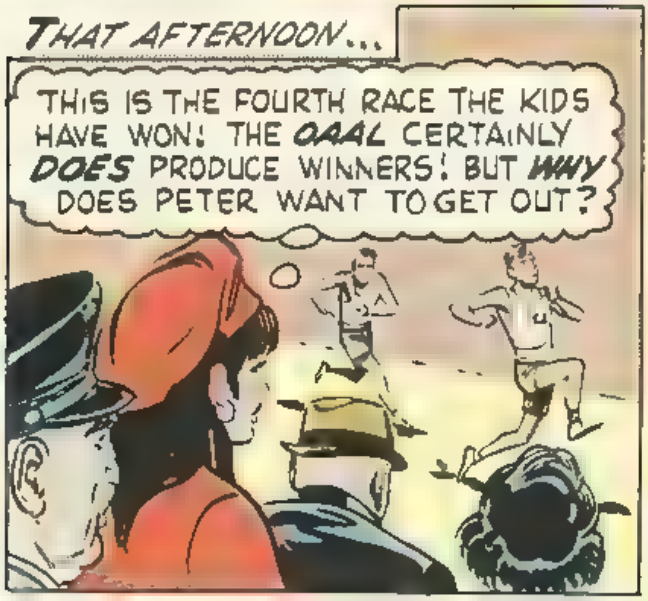

WHO IS THAT YOUNG BOY? HE CERTAINLY SEEMS TO HAVE A LOT OF POWER FOR SUCH A YOUNGSTER!
YES, WE HAVE GREAT HOPES FOR PETER DOBBSIN!

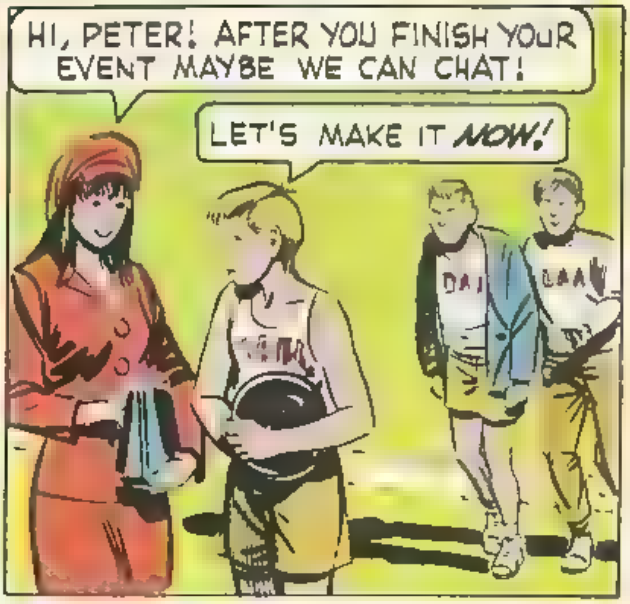
I'D LIKE TO DO AT LEAST ONE INTERVIEW! IT GIVES A PERSONAL ANGLE TO THE STORY!
NO! WE ARE TRYING TO DEVELOP THEIR ATHLETIC PROWESS, NOT THEIR EGOS!
I'LL HANDLE IT SO HE WON'T FEEL LIKE A HERO, JUST THE AVERAGE STUDENT HERE!
WELL...ALL RIGHT, BUT TO MAKE SURE THERE ARE NO SLIP-UPS IN YOUR QUESTIONING PETER, I WILL BE PRESENT DURING THE INTERVIEW!
SOON...
PETER, I'M LOOKING FOR THE HUMAN ANGLE IN MY NEWS STORY! YOU'RE SO GOOD AT THE DISCUS, WHY, I'LL BET YOU COULD THROW IT HALFWAY ACROSS THE RIVER!
S-SHE KNOWS!
TELL ME, DO YOU LIKE IT HERE?
WELL, THE ROOMS ARE FINE, THE FOOD GREAT AND THE TRAINING IS SUPER! BUT...WELL... I'D LIKE TO GO HOME!
THEY ALL FEEL THAT WAY AT FIRST... A NATURAL REACTION TO OUR GRUELLING WORK SCHEDULE AND IRON DISCIPLINE! THAT'S WHY WE PERMIT THEM NO CALLS, LETTERS OR FAMILY VISITS FOR SIX MONTHS! NOW, PETER, LET'S SHOW OUR VISITOR THE GYM!

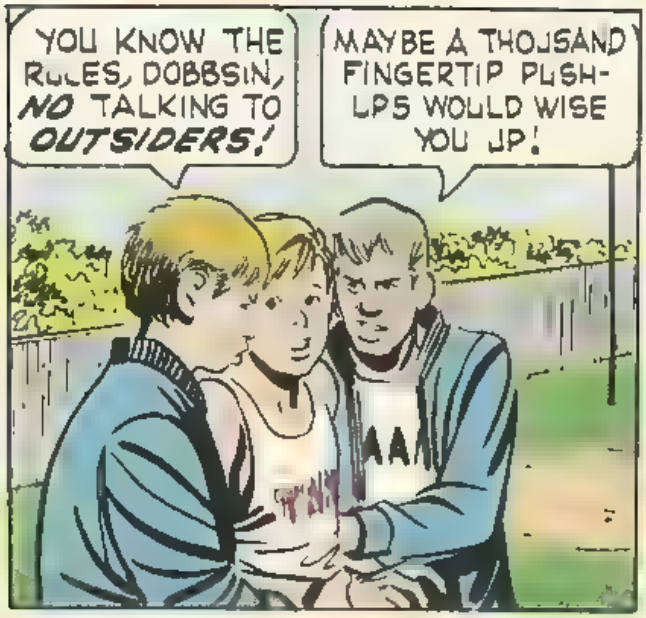

SHORTLY AFTER...
H-HELP!... SLIPPING!
MISS DRAKE, HOW FORTUNATE HE JUST MISSED.
FORTUNATE NOTHING! IF UNCLE HADN'T SHARPENED MY REACTION RATE, I'D HAVE HAD TWO FEET GOING THROUGH MY SKULL!
C CAN'T HOLD IT...

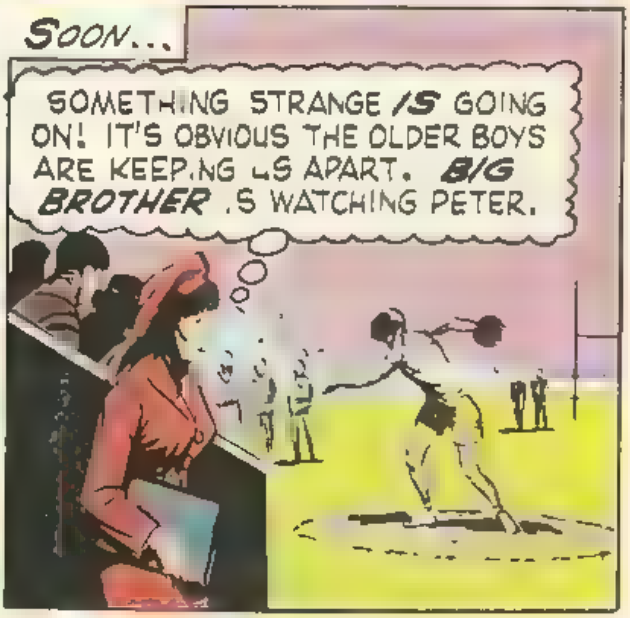

LUCKILY, MR. WAVERLY TOLD ME TO BE ON MY GUARD HERE!
THWAACK!
TWO CLOSE CALLS! WE'D BETTER GET YOU OUT OF HERE!
YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT I'LL BE AROUND SATURDAY TO COVER YOUR MEET AGAINST THE AIR FORCE TRACK TEAM AT THE MISSILE BASE!
IF YOU'D LIKE TO FINISH THE INTERVIEW—
COME ON, DOBBS N, CUT THE STAR TREATMENT!
RIGHT! WE NEED YOU TO HELP MARK THE DISCUS THROWS! LET'S GO!
LATER...
I DID DETECT FEAR IN PETER'S MANNER, BUT I COULDN'T SPEAK TO HIM LONG ENOUGH TO LEARN WHAT HE FEARS!
PERHAPS YOU'LL HAVE THAT OPPORTUNITY AT THE TRACK MEET!
SATURDAY MORNING BEFORE THE MEET, THE BOYS ARE TAKEN ON A GUIDED TOUR OF THE MISSILE BASE...
WE'LL GO DOWN INTO ONE OF THE SILOS NOW AND SHOW YOU THE B.G BIRD:
LOOK AND LISTEN, BOYS: THIS IS PART OF YOUR EDUCATION, YOU KNOW!

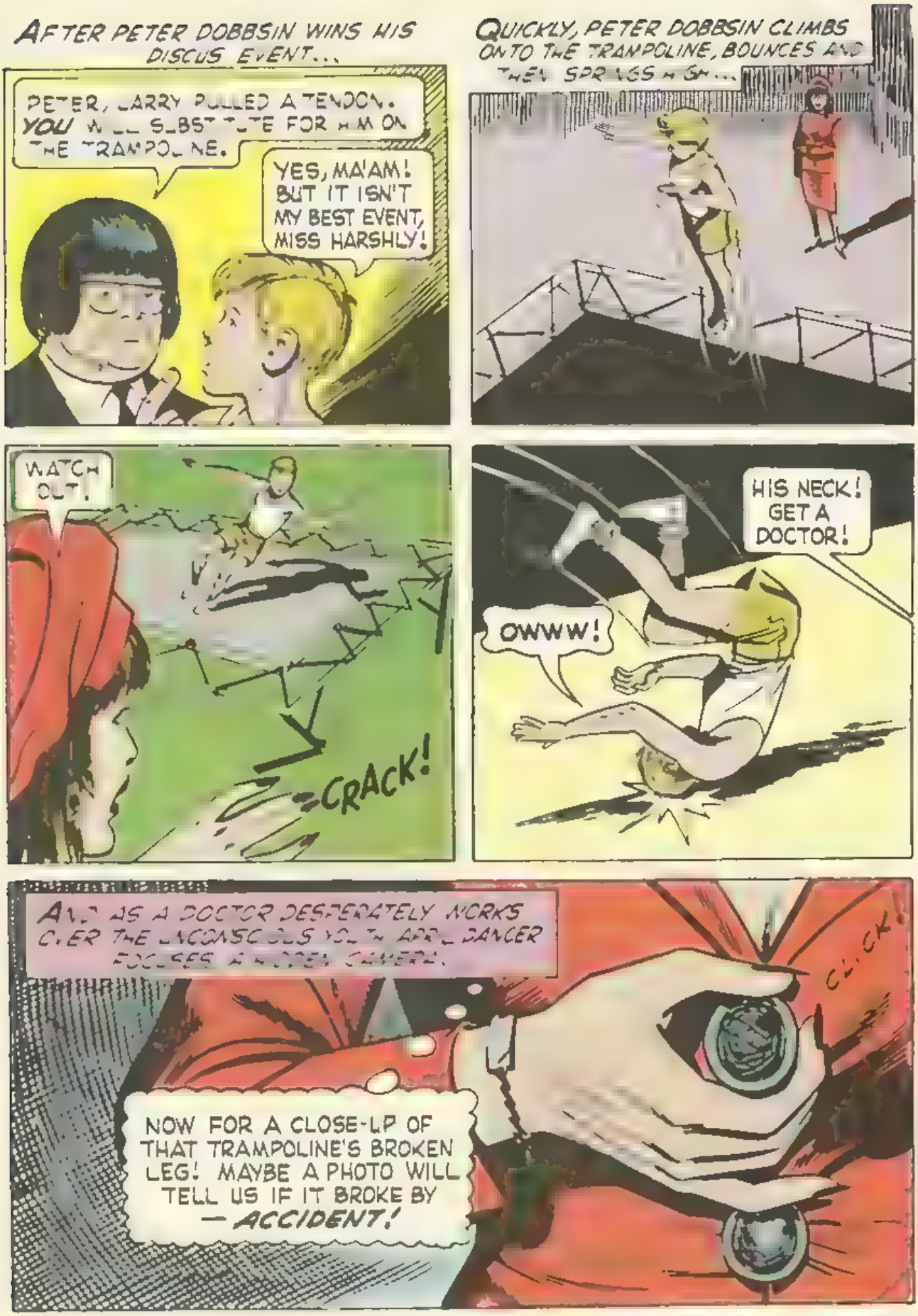

QUICKLY, THEY ARE SHOWN THE MISSILE, ITS CONTROLS AND THE BASE'S SECURITY MEASURES...


THAT AFTERNOON...
THIS IS THE FOURTH RACE THE KIDS HAVE WON! THE OAAL CERTAINLY DOES PRODUCE WINNERS! BUT WHY DOES PETER WANT TO GET OUT?


HI, PETER! AFTER YOU FINISH YOUR EVENT MAYBE WE CAN CHAT!
LET'S MAKE IT NOW!


YOU KNOW THE RULES, DOBBSIN, NO TALKING TO OUTSIDERS!
MAYBE A THOUSAND FINGERTIP PUSH-UPS WOULD WISE YOU UP!


SOON...
SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON! IT'S OBVIOUS THE OLDER BOYS ARE KEEPING US APART. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING PETER.

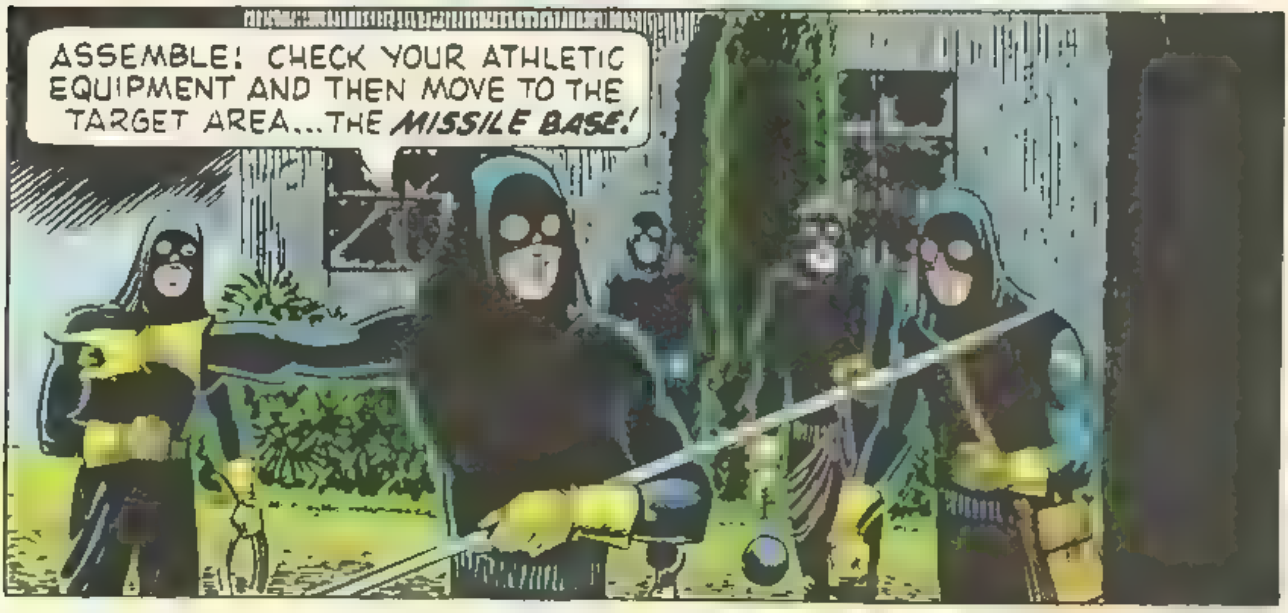

AFTER PETER DOBBSIN WINS HIS DISCUS EVENT...
PETER, LARRY PULLED A TENDON. YOU WILL SUBSTITUTE FOR HIM ON THE TRAMPOLINE.
YES, MA'AM! BUT IT ISN'T MY BEST EVENT, MISS HARSHLY!
QUICKLY, PETER DOBBSIN CLIMBS ONTO THE TRAMPOLINE, BOUNCES AND THEN SPRINGS HIGH...
WATCH OUT!
CRACK!
HIS NECK! GET A DOCTOR!
OWWW!
AND AS A DOCTOR DESPERATELY WORKS OVER THE UNCONSCIOUS YOUNG ACROBAT DANCER FOCUSES A HIDDEN CAMERA.
CLICK!
NOW FOR A CLOSE-UP OF THAT TRAMPOLINE'S BROKEN LEG! MAYBE A PHOTO WILL TELL US IF IT BROKE BY — ACCIDENT!

LATER, AT THE HOSPITAL...

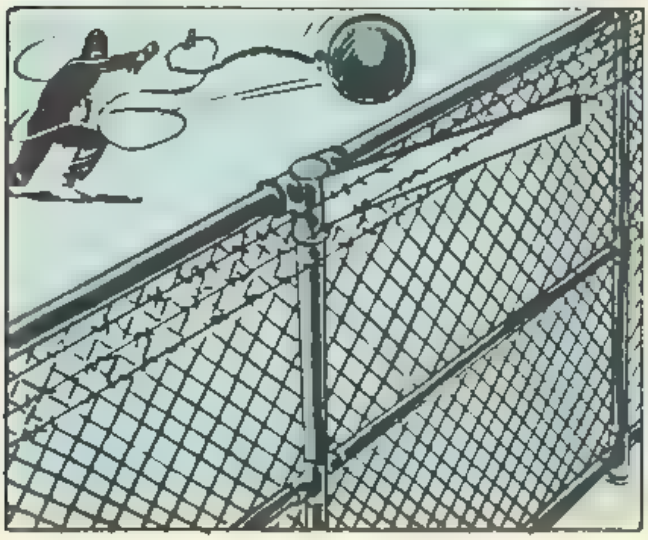
DREADFUL! POOR PETER...IS DEAD! WHAT A WRETCHED ACCIDENT!

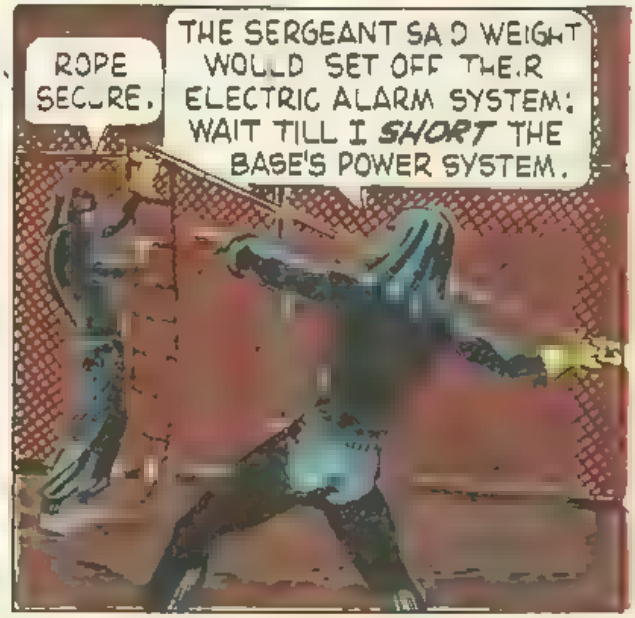
I HOPE MY PHOTOS WILL SHOW WHETHER IT WAS AN ACCIDENT OR *MURDER!*

THAT EVENING, AS APRIL DANCER DRIVES BACK TO UNCLE TO PROCESS HER FILM, AT THE MOTEL WHERE THE **OAAL** TEAM IS STAYING, THE BACK WINDOWS OPEN SILENTLY...



ONCE AT THE OUTER FENCE OF THE BASE, THE HAMMER THROWER STEPS FORWARD...

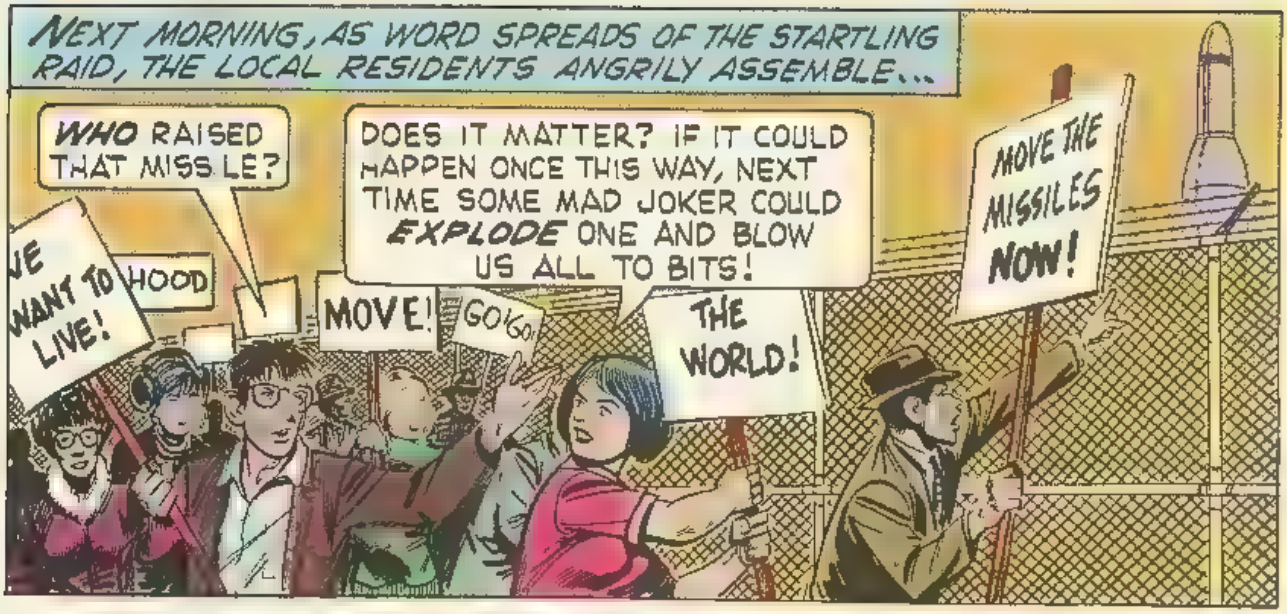


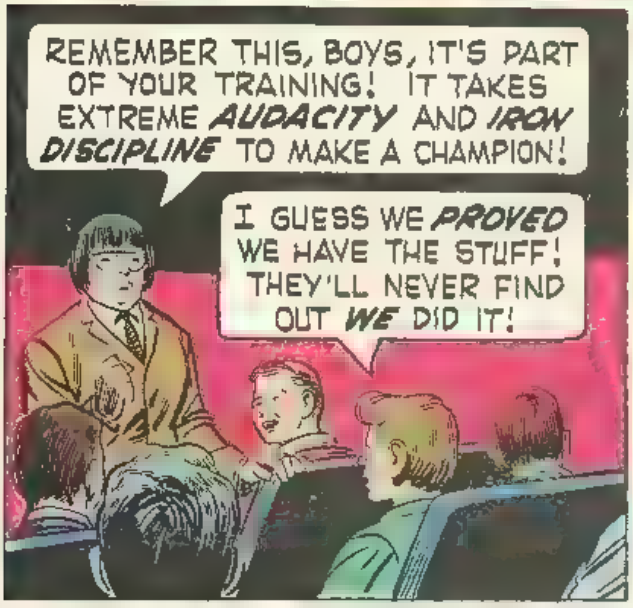


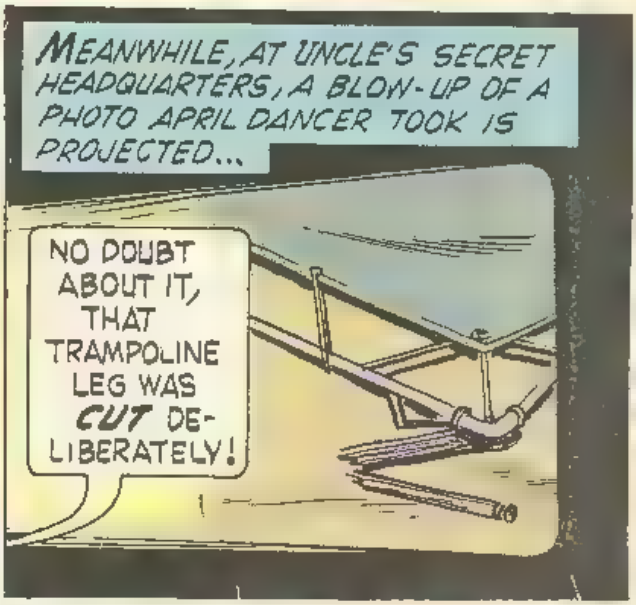
THE YOUTHFUL JAVELIN HURLER AIMS AND THE SHAFT SPEEDS WITH DEADLY ACCURACY...
DID YOU SEE THE LIGHTS GO OUT?
DON'T STAND SIGHT-SEEING... UP AND OVER. WE GOT A JOB TO DO.
THE NEAREST SILO IS NUMBER SEVEN TO OUR LEFT!
ONCE WE'RE THERE, LEAVE THE GUARD TO ME!
AS SIRENS SCREAM ACROSS THE BLACKED-OUT BASE, THE BOYS STEALTHILY ADVANCE...

OFFFF!
OWWW!
TWO STRIKES... THE GUARD IS OUT!
EMERGENCY POWER SYSTEM IS COMING ON...
GOOD! WE NEED IT TO FINISH THE JOB!
I REMEMBER THE DRILL THE MISSILE LAUNCHER TOLD US ABOUT! THIS SHOULD RAISE THE BIG BIRD.
AND THAT WILL COMPLETE OUR MISSION! NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS MAKE A CLEAN GETAWAY!
MISSILE COMING UP INTO POSITION...
THOSE JEEPS ARE HEADING THIS WAY! TIME FOR A LITTLE POLE-VAULTING!

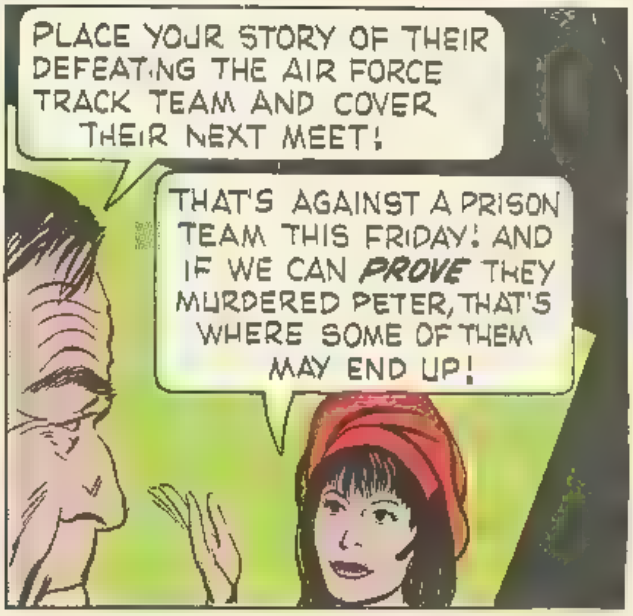
SNAPPP!
YEOOOWWW!
BZZZ
PERFECT SCORE

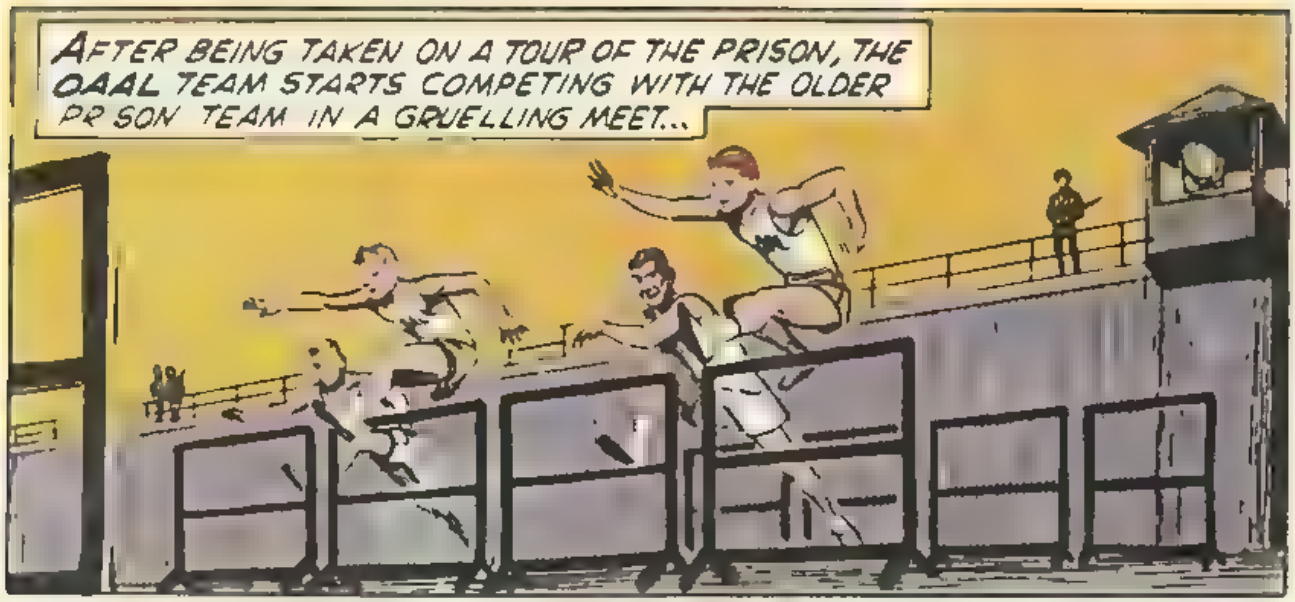

NEXT MORNING, AS WORD SPREADS OF THE STARTLING RAID, THE LOCAL RESIDENTS ANGRILY ASSEMBLE...
WHO RAISED THAT MISSILE?
DOES IT MATTER? IF IT COULD HAPPEN ONCE THIS WAY, NEXT TIME SOME MAD JOKER COULD EXPLODE ONE AND BLOW US ALL TO BITS!
MOVE THE MISSILES NOW!
WE WANT TO LIVE!
HOOD
MOVE!
GO!GO!
THE WORLD!

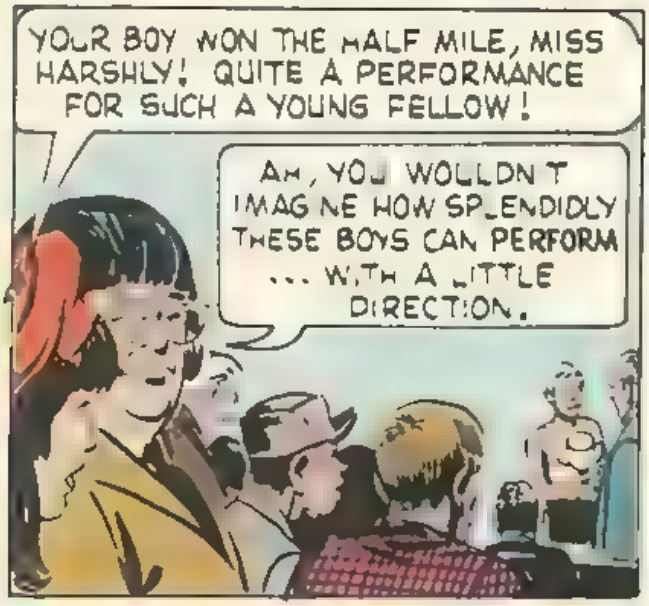

REMEMBER THIS, BOYS, IT'S PART OF YOUR TRAINING! IT TAKES EXTREME AUDACITY AND IRON DISCIPLINE TO MAKE A CHAMPION!
I GUESS WE PROVED WE HAVE THE STUFF! THEY'LL NEVER FIND OUT WE DID IT!

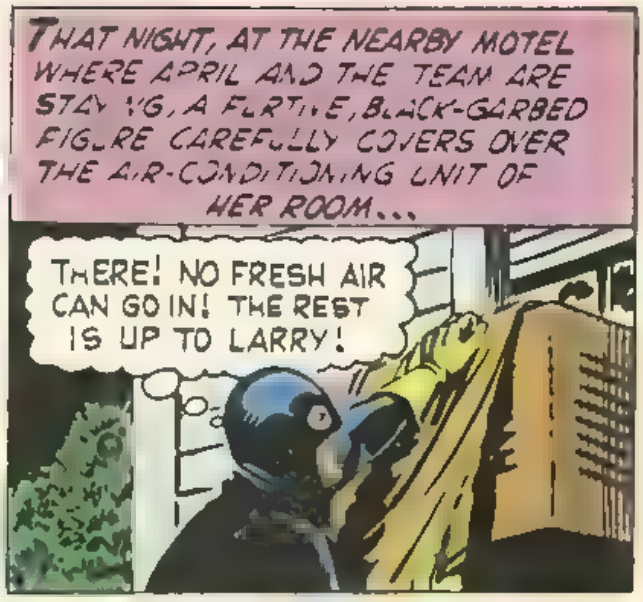

MEANWHILE, AT UNCLE'S SECRET HEADQUARTERS, A BLOW-UP OF A PHOTO APRIL DANCER TOOK IS PROJECTED...
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, THAT TRAMPOLINE LEG WAS CUT DELIBERATELY!

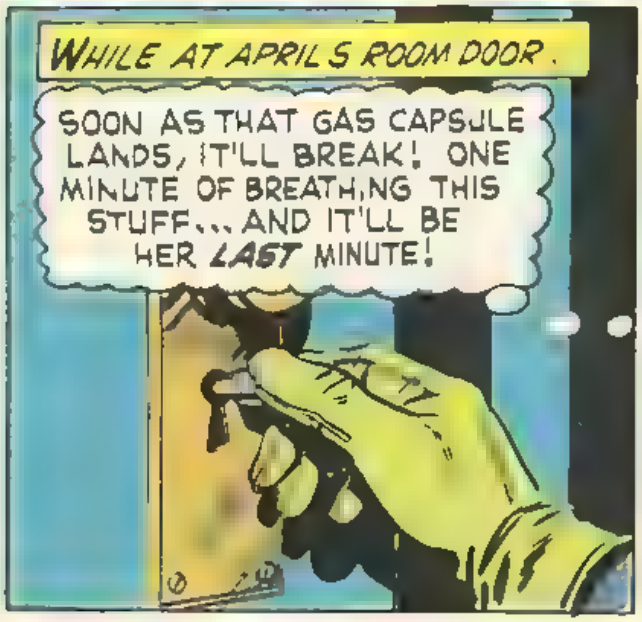
YOU'RE RIGHT, MR. WAVERLY! BUT WHY?
APPARENTLY PETER DOBBSIN WAS MORE THAN HOMESICK: HE WAS DANGEROUS. BUT TO WHOM?

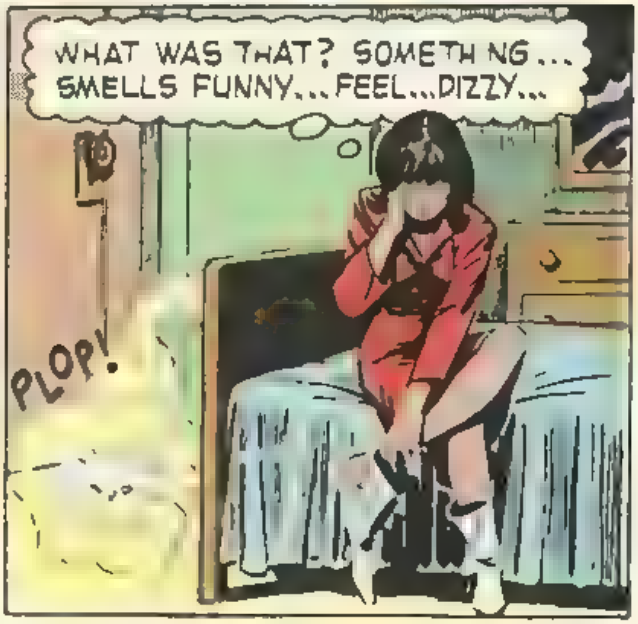

PLACE YOUR STORY OF THEIR DEFEATING THE AIR FORCE TRACK TEAM AND COVER THEIR NEXT MEET!
THAT'S AGAINST A PRISON TEAM THIS FRIDAY! AND IF WE CAN PROVE THEY MURDERED PETER, THAT'S WHERE SOME OF THEM MAY END UP!


AFTER BEING TAKEN ON A TOUR OF THE PRISON, THE OAAL TEAM STARTS COMPETING WITH THE OLDER PRISON TEAM IN A GRUELLING MEET...

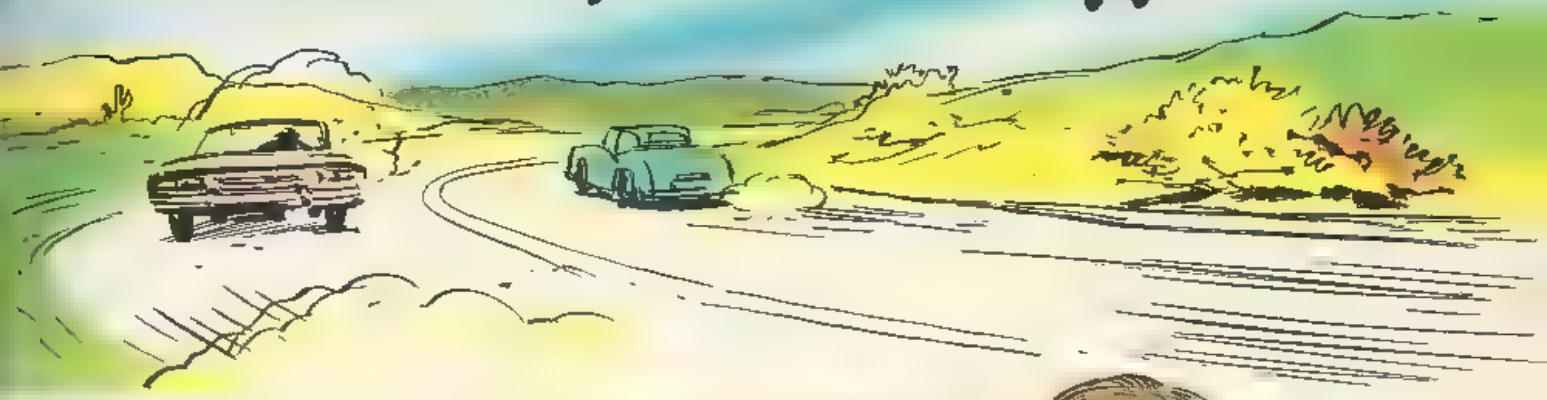

YOUR BOY WON THE HALF MILE, MISS HARSHLY! QUITE A PERFORMANCE FOR SUCH A YOUNG FELLOW!
AH, YOU WOULDN'T IMAGINE HOW SPLENDIDLY THESE BOYS CAN PERFORM ... WITH A LITTLE DIRECTION.


THAT NIGHT, AT THE NEARBY MOTEL WHERE APRIL AND THE TEAM ARE STAYING, A FURTIVE, BLACK-GARBED FIGURE CAREFULLY COVERS OVER THE AIR-CONDITIONING UNIT OF HER ROOM...
THERE! NO FRESH AIR CAN GO IN! THE REST IS UP TO LARRY!


WHILE AT APRIL'S ROOM DOOR.
SOON AS THAT GAS CAPSULE LANDS, IT'LL BREAK! ONE MINUTE OF BREATHING THIS STUFF... AND IT'LL BE HER LAST MINUTE!


WHAT WAS THAT? SOMETHING... SMELLS FUNNY... FEEL... DIZZY...
PLOP!

The SIDE by SIDE Affair



APRIL DANCER, famous U.N.C.L.E. agent, faced one of the most hazardous assignments of her exciting career with the world wide law enforcement organisation.

"It sounds simple," she had told Mark Slate, her harried helper, some hours earlier. "But just you try getting someone safely from one side of the country to the other . . . with THRUSH hiding behind every bush and corner."

That was about the size of the assignment. April had to get Janine, code name for a very important person, from New York to U.N.C.L.E.'s Los Angeles establishment . . . *safely*. Janine was useful to U.N.C.L.E., even more useful to THRUSH, and if the crime organisation once got a lead on April's latest venture, she'd have little peace during her two-thousand-mile trek across country.

To avert suspicion a devious route had been worked out and April and Janine would have to travel by car, by plane and by rail. Every stage of the journey had been carefully plotted and April's high I.Q. mind had retained the instructions in detail.

The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. drummed her fingers on the steering-wheel, waiting for the move which would start it all. A tremendous adventure faced the two girls, of that April was certain, but with her U.N.C.L.E. training and background April had schooled herself to face one problem at a time.

That particular problem, right now, was to make a successful start to the journey. She had driven to the appropriate map reference, and, complying with orders, had pulled on to the shoulder of the main road, close by a clump of trees. The engine of the low sports saloon ticked over effortlessly beneath the rakish long bonnet. The passenger door was open and occasionally the car rocked slightly as a speeding car rushed by, but traffic on the whole was light.

Within fifteen seconds, it would be exactly 2 p.m. The weather was sunny, the country air calm and still. The high-pitched bustle of New York City lay some miles behind and such was the tranquility of the situation that April might have been forgiven if she had been lulled into a false sense of security.

Through her rear-view mirror April could see a car coming up from

behind. It was just 2 p.m. as it screeched to a piercing halt alongside. A door was flung open, a young woman in a smart grey suit got out and the car lurched away and into the distance, the door being pulled shut as it accelerated away.

The peace of the country and the summer afternoon had been rudely interrupted. Almost before April had realised that the car was the *car*, the woman in the grey suit was seated by her side.

"Code name?" snapped April inquiringly.

"Janine."

"Code number?"

"Z41."

April pushed back the jacket sleeve, uncovering the right wrist of her companion, and saw the 4-inch scar -a third and final means of identification. The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. was satisfied that beside her sat the real Janine and not an impostor. She revved the engine, swung the wheel round, did a U-turn and 200 yards farther on pulled off the main highway and down a cross road. Ahead of her, a road journey of nearly three hundred miles.

April settled back in the driving-seat, took a deep breath and released a controlled smile in her companion's direction. *The adventure had begun.*

There wasn't much to talk about and at first the silence between the two girls was awkward. Tension relaxed after the first few miles, though neither could forget the serious object of their meeting: and for April, a constant watch and alertness for any action untoward, was essential

"We've got a pretty long journey ahead of us, so we'd better settle down to each other's company," smiled April.

"That's right," answered Janine, her pretty mouth curling slightly in a friendly half-smile.

"I'd like to get this straight, though," continued April. "Just for the record, I'm charged with getting you safely from point A to point B. That means I give the orders and you do as I say. Understand?"

"Understood."

April felt she ought to explain. "Whatever I ask you to do will be for your own safety and well-being. My job . . . perhaps my own life . . . depends on keeping you safe."

The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. swallowed as her own words reminded her of the magnitude of the mission. But inwardly, the challenge was welcomed by the intrepid U.N.C.L.E. agent, even if it made her heart skip a beat now and then.

The car sped along smoothly. At an intersection April noticed a car parked off the road. Innocent perhaps, but April knew she couldn't be too cautious She tried to put it from her mind—if she was going to get suspicious at every parked car she would be a bundle of nerves long before the end of the journey. Even so. . . .

That niggling suspicion returned when she noticed, five miles ahead, a similarly parked car same colour; same make

She pulled the handbag on the seat closer to her and gave it a grateful glance. It carried a miniature armoury of special U.N.C.L.E. devices she would be far unhappier to be without.

April handled the car beautifully and she and Janine were making good time. In the distance she could see some sort of obstruction and as she approached, she identified is as a diversion barrier.

"Remember now," April reminded Janine. "I'll do the talking and you do exactly as I say."

"Sure," agreed Janine.

April eased her foot from the accelerator pedal and damped down the car's speed. She glided to a halt as the uniformed cop approached

He touched his cap "Sorry, miss, I'm afraid you've got to divert. There's been an accident. Take this secondary road on the right. About five miles ahead it rejoins the highway."

Everything sounded genuine. April glanced ahead of the barrier and saw the car upturned on the left-hand side. She turned to the cop. He looked the part and had said all the right things

"Okay, officer I'll just reverse from the barrier so I can turn off."

As she twisted to look through the rear window, her gaze brushed past the special interior mirror in the back of the car which was angled to reflect through the car's windscreen. She caught a brief movement from behind the upturned car. She couldn't have imagined it. Instantly, she sensed a trap. THRUSH must have laid an ambush down that secondary road.

April reversed farther than necessary, jerked to a halt, moved into forward gear and pressed sharply on the accelerator pedal

"Get your head down, Janine," she shouted as the car rocketed to the barrier

The cop sprang out of the way and April saw the look of astonishment and dismay on his face. For one horrifying moment she thought she might have made a mistake . . . but then she knew she hadn't. A bullet kicked into the side of the car as the vehicle crashed into the barrier, and splintered wood sprayed in all directions. The man hiding behind the upturned car had revealed himself, automatic in hand, the moment he saw THRUSH's plans going wrong

April pulled heavily on the wheel and pointed the car in his direction. A second shot ricocheted from the grille of the car, but then the second THRUSH agent sprang for his life, out of the way of the onrushing car.

Her objective completed, April pulled heavily again on the wheel, this time in the reverse direction. For one moment there was every chance that she had left the move too late. The two girls braced themselves as their car brushed the upturned hulk of the THRUSH decoy, but although there was a searing as a strip of the rear wing was ripped away, the car kept going forward. Once clear, April put her foot down . . . *but hard.*

"Phew . . . that was a close one." The comment came almost involuntarily as April turned towards her companion.

To the U N C.L.E girl's astonishment, Janine appeared remarkably unmoved by the episode. In fact, she had pulled down the sun visor and was prettying her hair with the aid of the vanity mirror.

"You're a cool one," commented April, puzzled.

Janine turned to April and smiled. "You acted very well," she said. "I think I'm going to be quite safe with you!"

April pulled into a motel just a couple of miles from the airport.

"We stay here until flight time," she revealed.

The two girls checked in, freshened up, and went straight into the restaurant for a meal. They collected their keys from reception and retired to their chalet.

"We've got just four hours' rest," announced April. "Then you and me, my girl, are on the move again." She took out her slimline radio communicator. "Open Channel D, please."

"Yes, Miss Dancer . . . what is it?" It was Alexander Waverly, back in U.N.C.L.E.'s New York head quarters.

"We're at the motel, sir. So far so good, though THRUSH attempted to stop us *en route*."

"Well done, Miss Dancer. Keep strictly to the plan."

April telescoped the receiver and replaced it in her skirt pocket. "So far so good," she repeated drowsily as she and Janine dropped their heads on to the pillows.

Janine slept well, though April only dozed. After four hours they rose, freshened up, got in the car and drove off to the airport. It was still dark and the airport lights were ablaze. The early morning flight was on time and they took off as scheduled. The flight was uneventful, but as they strode out of the airport lounge towards the cab rank, April sensed that someone was following.

She turned, and the THRUSH agent was unmistakable. She looked to the right. A second THRUSH agent was already advancing towards her. A third man came from the left and, directly in front, some fifty yards ahead, a fourth.

It looked an impossible situation. But within a couple of seconds she had decided what to do. She whispered to Janine. "When I say, run . . . as hard as you can with me." There was silence for a couple of seconds, then *"Run!"*

April took a half-right direction and she and Janine covered the ground so well that the THRUSH agents on the right and left and behind were caught unawares. By the time they had recovered and were in pursuit, April and Janine were ahead of all three of them.

This was the object of April's clever manoeuvre. Three of the four thugs were now concentrated in one area, and she proceeded to deal with them . . . together. High heels stopped echoing through the large vestibule as April stopped, and from the waistband of her skirt, from inside the secret lining, she took a spray capsule. The vapour squirted towards the faces of the three advancing THRUSH agents and they dropped to the ground, temporarily stunned.

April turned, but the fourth agent was now almost on her. As he leaped towards the two girls, a man wearing a heavy overcoat, with the high collar pulled well up around his face, crashed into him heavily, sending the THRUSH agent reeling.

"That's a lucky break," murmured April, but then her head turned in astonishment as she heard the voice

"Quick, April love—into that cab." April looked at the face and the right eye winked at her. *"Quick, April . . . get moving!"* repeated Mark Slate.

April and Janine rushed into the waiting cab and instantly were away

A quick glance through the rear window and April saw Mark rush out into the roadway, the THRUSH agent after him.

"Will he make it okay?" inquired Janine.

"You don't have to worry about Mark Slate," assured April. "He'll be okay."

The railroad station was a couple of miles off and April wanted to get there as quickly as possible. She urged the cab driver to speed up and he responded well.

The California Express was comfortable and cosy, and April admitted to herself that she was happy that the two of them had got so far unscathed.

As it pulled out of the station she felt she could relax . . . just a little. The movement of the train was monotonous and it required all her will-power to prevent dropping off to sleep. Food would help keep her awake and April suggested they should eat. Janine agreed, and they moved along to the restaurant car.

The food was good and the two girls enjoyed it, but April was cautious. Somehow, from somewhere, the restaurant car attendant looked familiar. April was sure they had met before, but she couldn't remember when.

It was cruel luck for the Girl from U.N.C.L.E. The attendant was a THRUSH agent on a routine mission, the job on the train being his regular cover. But he recognised the famous U.N.C.L.E. girl, checked with THRUSH headquarters, and he was congratulated on his foresight. As April called for coffee she didn't notice the small capsule the attendant slipped into Janine's cup.

By the time the drug began to take effect the attendant had moved back to the kitchen.

At first April's suspicion wasn't aroused. But when Janine's head dropped back and she finally slumped forward across the table, April realised only too well. *Of course* . . . it came back to her now. She'd met the attendant, only fleetingly, during an assignment in Europe.

Doping Janine would be only the first move. He wouldn't be content with that. His ultimate aim would be to abduct her. How would he do it? When?

April couldn't afford to wait. She must wrest the initiative from him. She left her seat and moved towards the kitchen compartment.

The THRUSH agent was seated on a stool as April approached. He sensed her behind him . . . and moved quickly

The two moved to each other like a couple of wrestlers sparring for an opening. He sprang at April and the Girl from U.N.C.L.E. ducked nimbly out of the way. April pressed her advantage and dived after him, but before she could get a good hold on him, he had pushed her away with his right foot. As he followed up, the train lurched and he crashed into a couple of stools. He overbalanced

and April made use of the moment's advantage. From the heel of her shoe she unscrewed a small missile. She hurled it at the THRUSH agent. As the doped dart found its mark, the man slumped forward and remained, motionless, on the floor.

"Touché," said April quietly to herself as she smoothed her skirt and tucked her jumper back into the waistband. "THRUSH sure is persistent on this trip."

She retraced her steps to the compartment and then halted in her

OPERATION CHOP OFF!

April has exchanged her long luscious locks in favour of a more sophisticated shorter cut which she finds she can adapt into so many versatile styles—less drying problems too!

If you have long hair and are thinking of having it chopped off, here's a style that may suit you. It is styled for petite sizes among you, giving added height and especially flattering for a small face and slender neck.

Hair is slightly layered with a full fringe and tapered into the nape of the neck. Better ask a qualified hairdresser to cut this for you, then you can set it yourself following the diagram.

Set the fringe over cottonwool or with a roller and hold the nape hair snugly to the head with sellotape. To dress out, backbrush on top, following the sideways movement of the style, to give the high rounded line, then smooth top hair over. Backbrush the fringe as well for a bouncy effect, and

flick the side sections forward on to the cheeks. Hair at back should be brushed neatly into the neck.

Hairstyle by Richard Hudnut. Photograph by courtesy of Beauty News Service.

tracks. The seat where Janine had been slumped was . . . empty!

The remark was involuntary "Oh no . . ." she said, dismayed. Quickly, she looked around the compartment, dashed to check the toilets, but of Janine there was no sign. She had vanished.

There was still a half-hour journey before the train would reach the point where April and Janine were due to leave it. From there, the plan was for April to pick up a hire car from the railroad depot, drive with Janine to a rendezvous, and from another U.N.C.L.E. agent she would receive instructions for the final section of her journey.

But first she must find Janine. She contemplated her next move, but her thoughts were interrupted by the *bleep bleep* of her radio communicator

Waverly's voice came through clearly. "Will you report your whereabouts and progress, Miss Dancer?"

"I'm on the California Express, sir, about thirty miles from our destination."

"Well done, Miss Dancer."

"There's just one point, sir," continued April hesitantly. "I'm afraid I've lost Janine!"

From the other end came silence. Then, after what April thought was a never-ending pause, Waverly spoke again: "Continue as scheduled, Miss Dancer. Repeat—as scheduled Do you understand?"

April was puzzled. "I understand, sir," she answered disconsolately.

The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. was still full of recriminations for her laxity when she picked up the hire car and sped to her rendezvous point —the lounge of a hotel some ten miles away. She checked in and went immediately to her room. She waited ten minutes, went out of the room again, down the corridor to the next room, knocked distinctly three times, turned the knob and walked in

Her U.N.C.L.E contact was sitting in a chair, his back to the door.

"Agent 17225 April Dancer," the Girl from U.N.C.L.E., announced routinely.

"And very nice, too," came back the jocular reply as Mark Slate, a wide grin on his face, wheeled round in the swivel chair and faced April.

"*You*—you've heard, I suppose."

"Don't worry, love," consoled Mark. "You've done a great job. Janine is tucked up safe and sound in U.N.C.L.E.'s Los Angeles premises, far from the reach of THRUSH."

April's eyes widened and her mouth opened in amazement. "*What* . . . but I don't understand."

"You will," announced Mark, casually. "But first we ought to celebrate your success. Let's hop across the road for a soda in the corner drugstore."

"Big deal," responded April, shrugging her shoulders.

Back at U.N.C.L.E. headquarters, April listened in wonder and with a little natural resentment. "I'm afraid you were our decoy, all along the line, Miss Dancer," explained Alexander Waverly. "And the excellent thing about the entire scheme is that THRUSH fell for it. While you drew their attention, we were able to move the real Janine in complete safety."

"Then who was the Janine *I* had?" queried April.

"Oh, just a professional decoy U.N.C.L.E. has been able to use many times before, but perhaps never more successfully than on this occasion." Waverly's eyes twinkled before going on: "I'm sorry we weren't able to bring you into our confidence, Miss Dancer, but I'm sure you realise how impossible that would have been."

"Er . . . why, yes," stumbled April.

"You did extremely well to get your companion as far as you did," announced Waverly.

Mark butted in: "As a matter of fact, I bet a couple of bucks you'd have lost her by the time you got to the airport," he teased.

"Ouch!" grimaced Mark as April kicked his shins.

"But what happened to Janine . . . my Janine, I mean?" inquired April anxiously.

"I wouldn't worry about her," said Waverly. "She's a seasoned campaigner and can well look after herself. THRUSH will quickly realise that she can tell them nothing and will release her, unharmed."

"Some girl . . ." announced April. "But not very sociable. . . "

The GIRL from U.N.C.L.E.
PART TWO

THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E.

THE FINAL ATTACK

WEAK AND DIZZY, APRIL DANCER SINKS TO THE MOTEL FLOOR, AS WITH A FINAL DESPERATE EFFORT, SHE HURLS HER SHOE...

CRASSSH!

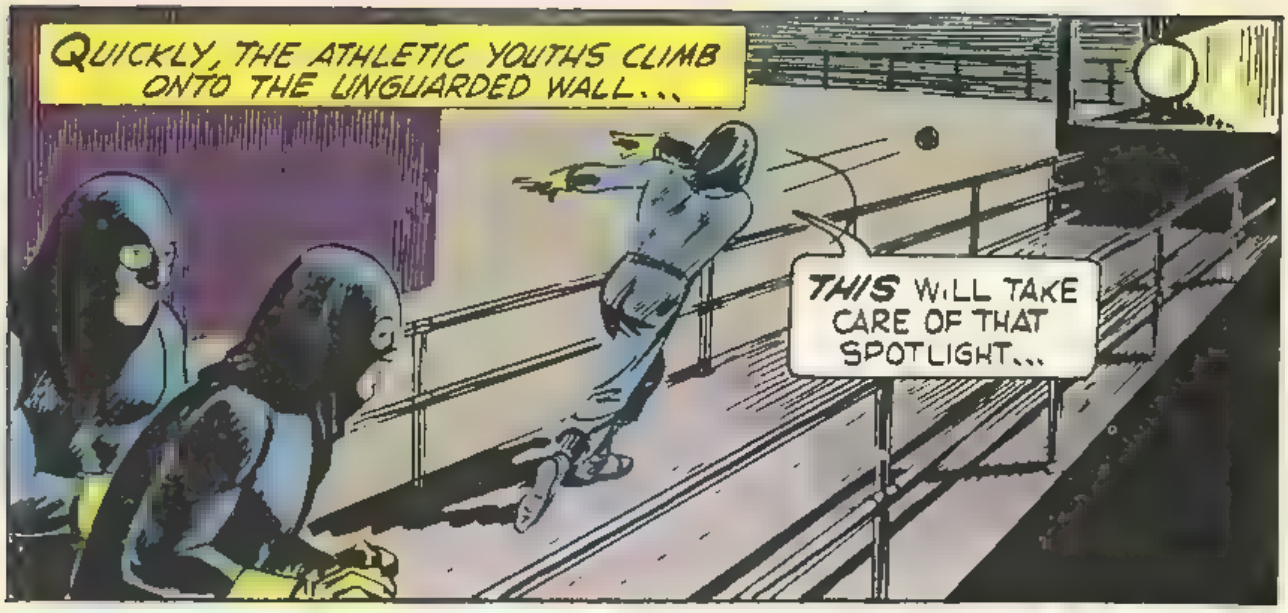
AS THE TINKLING GLASS FALLS, SHE LIES MOTIONLESS...

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE PRISON...

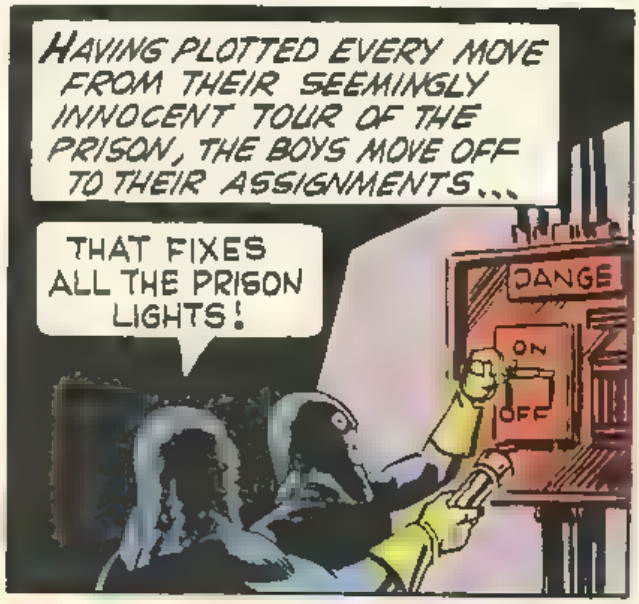
LUCKILY, THAT WALL'S ONLY FOURTEEN FEET SIX AND I CAN CLEAR SIXTEEN IN A BREEZE!

OWWW!

HERE! CLIMB UP FAST BEFORE THE SPOTLIGHT SWINGS BACK THIS WAY!

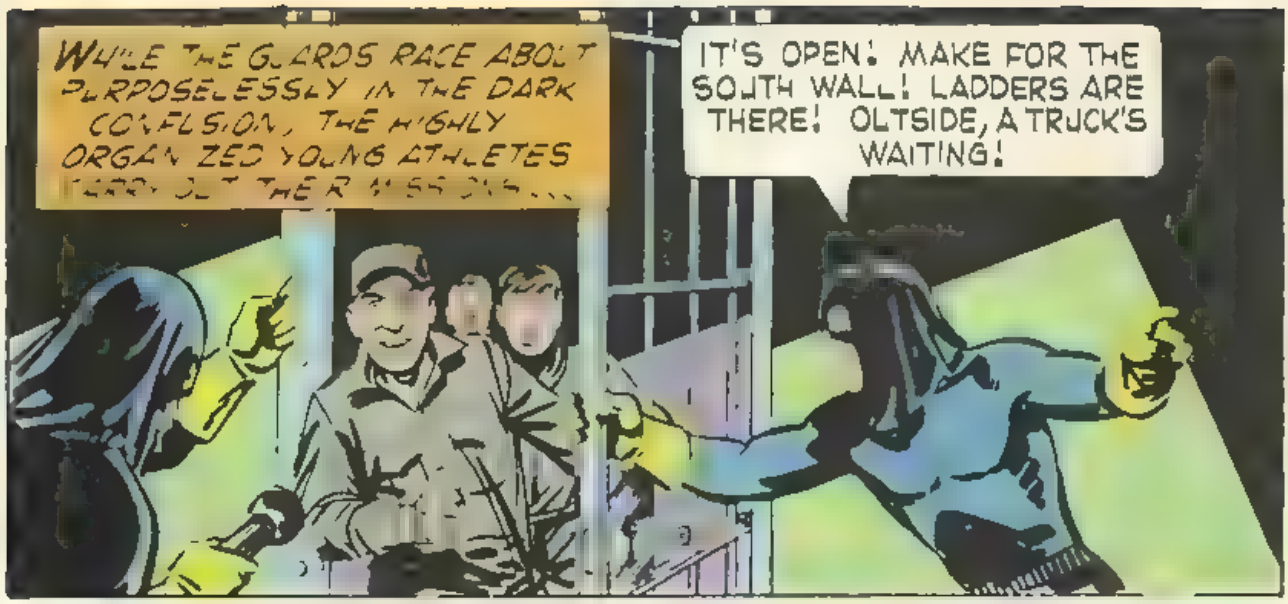

QUICKLY, THE ATHLETIC YOUTHS CLIMB ONTO THE UNGUARDED WALL...
THIS WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT SPOTLIGHT...

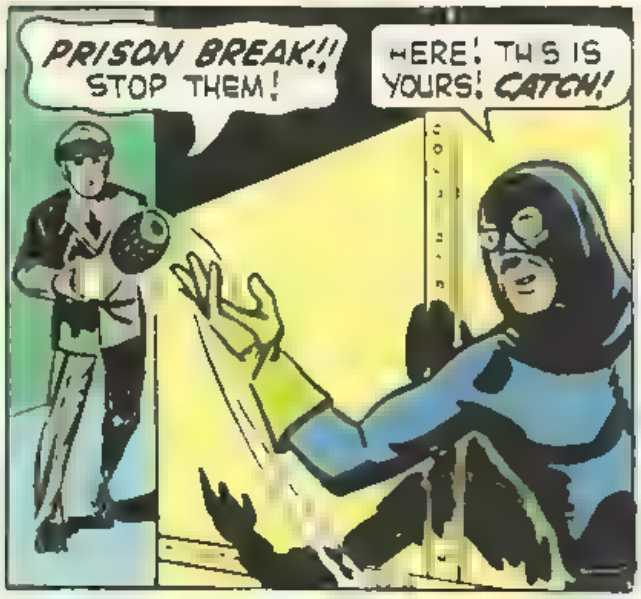
SMASH!
W-WHAT HIT IT?!


HAVING PLOTTED EVERY MOVE FROM THEIR SEEMINGLY INNOCENT TOUR OF THE PRISON, THE BOYS MOVE OFF TO THEIR ASSIGNMENTS...
THAT FIXES ALL THE PRISON LIGHTS!
DANGE
ON
OFF

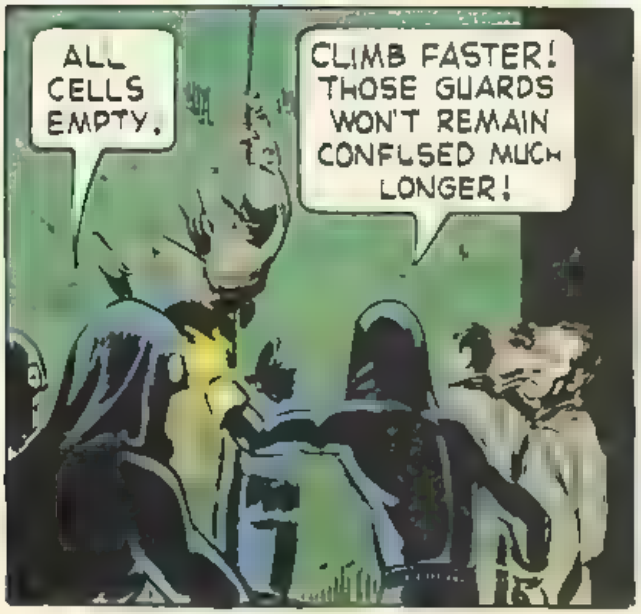
LOOK! SOMEONE IS MOVING THERE!

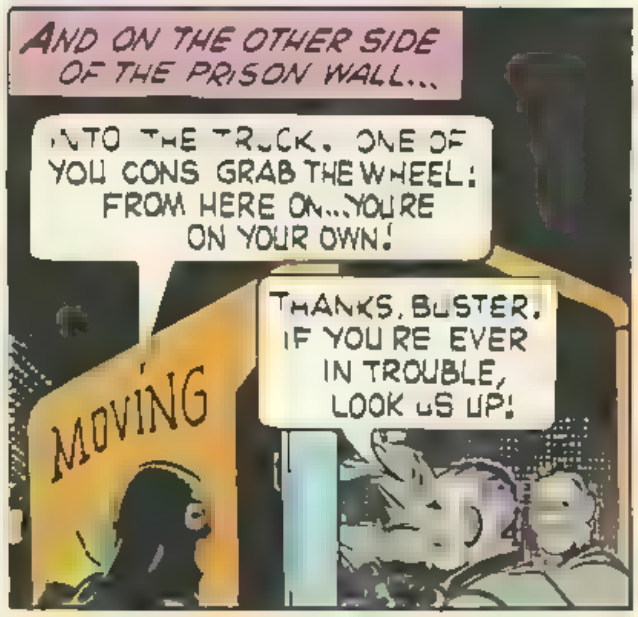
GRAB THE CELL KEYS AND HIS TEAR GAS GRENADE!
YEOWW!


WHILE THE GUARDS RACE ABOUT PURPOSELESSLY IN THE DARK CONFUSION, THE HIGHLY ORGANIZED YOUNG ATHLETES
IT'S OPEN! MAKE FOR THE SOUTH WALL! LADDERS ARE THERE! OUTSIDE, A TRUCK'S WAITING!


PRISON BREAK!! STOP THEM!
HERE! THIS IS YOURS! CATCH!

T-TEAR GAS...
MY EYES..

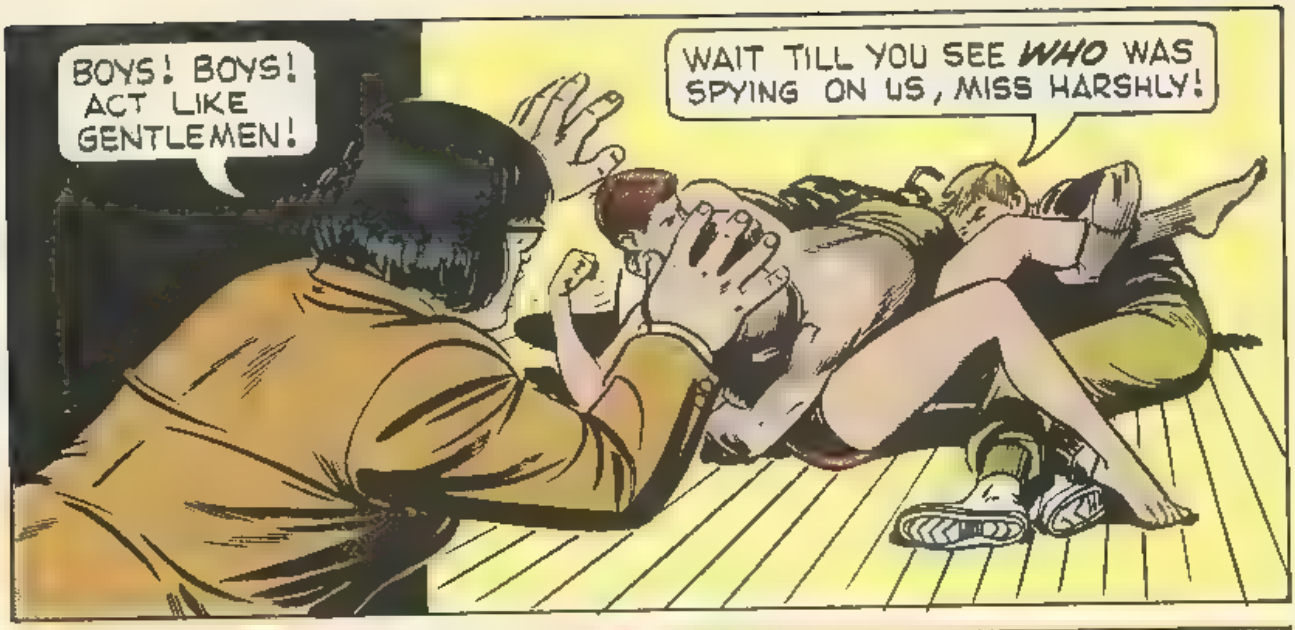

ALL CELLS EMPTY.
CLIMB FASTER! THOSE GUARDS WON'T REMAIN CONFUSED MUCH LONGER!


AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PRISON WALL...
INTO THE TRUCK. ONE OF YOU CONS GRAB THE WHEEL! FROM HERE ON...YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!
THANKS, BUSTER. IF YOU'RE EVER IN TROUBLE, LOOK US UP!
MOVING

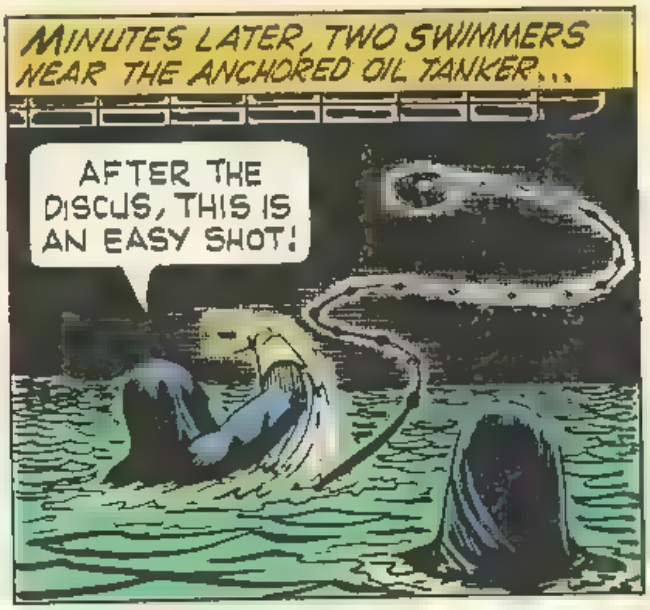
SOON AFTER, APRIL IS ROUSED BY INSISTENT KNOCKING ON HER MOTEL DOOR...
MISS DRAKE, THIS IS THE MANAGER! OPEN UP! URGENT!
Y-YES?
LOCK YOUR DOOR AND WINDOW! LET NO ONE IN! THERE'S BEEN A PRISON BREAK!
A JAIL BREAK! WOW! SOUNDS KEEN!
INTO YOUR ROOMS! SECURE YOUR DOORS! THOSE DREADFUL MEN AREN'T GOING TO HARM MY ATHLETES!
NEXT DAY...
WELL, THE POLICE HAVE ROUNDED UP ALMOST ALL OF THE ESCAPEES!
IF I HADN'T SEEN THOSE OAAL KIDS IN THEIR PYJAMAS, I'D HAVE SUSPECTED THAT THEY DUMPED THE GAS PELLET INTO MY ROOM AND HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE PRISON BREAK!
I STILL DO! AND I EXPECT THINGS TO GET STICKIER! MISS DANCER, WEAR THIS RING AT THEIR NEXT ATHLETIC MEET! IF YOU FLIP OUT THE PEARL, IT SETS UP A DIRECTIONAL ALARM BEAM WHICH MR. SLATE CAN HOME IN ON! YOU MAY BE NEEDING HELP!

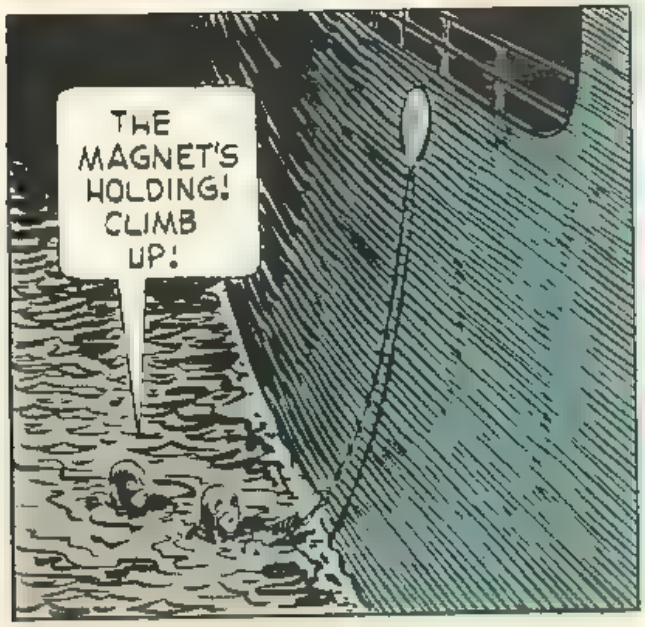
A WEEK LATER, AS THE OAAL BOYS TAKE ON EASTERN COLLEGE TRACK STARS AT RANDALL'S ISLAND, APRIL POSES AGAIN AS A REPORTER AND WATCHES . . .
OAAL
WELL, MY BOYS HAVE DONE WELL TODAY! THEY'LL BE GLAD TO GET BACK TO THAT YACHT THAT WAS SO KINDLY LOANED TO US SO THEY CAN REST UP FOR TOMORROW'S FINAL EVENTS!
I THINK I'LL DROP ABOARD THEIR YACHT... UNINVITED!
THAT NIGHT...
CLOSE ENOUGH, MARK!
REMEMBER— IF YOU NEED HELP, USE THE RING!
I MAY BE IN LUCK! NO ONE'S OUT ON DECK TO SPOT ME!
WE'LL SET THAT OIL TANKER ON FIRE, MISS HARSHLY... BUT WHY?
BECAUSE ONCE YOU CUT ITS ANCHOR CHAIN, IT WILL DRIFT TOWARD THE SHORE OF THE EAST SIDE! SOMEWHERE THERE IS UNCLE'S HEADQUARTERS!

WE MAY SET A LOT OF STREETS ON FIRE, BUT UNCLE WILL BURN DOWN WITH THE REST OF THE BUILDINGS! NOW, LARRY, YOU WILL TAKE CARE OF THE TANKER'S BOW GUARD.
NO, MISS HARSHLY! MY STATION IS THE STERN GUARD: CHECK THE TANKER'S PLANS WHERE YOU MARKED OUT POSITIONS!
I LEFT THE PLANS IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY SAFE, LARRY! YOU'LL DO AS I SAY...
WHAT'S BOTHERING THE CAT?
MEEOOWW!
LOOK! A SNOOPER.
IT'S A DAME! STOP HER!
BEFORE APRIL CAN VAULT OVER THE SIDE...
GOT HER. HOLD HER AND LET'S SEE WHO SHE IS!
H-HEY!
SHE KNOWS JUDO! PILE ON HER! SHE CAN'T TOSS US ALL OFF THAT EASILY!

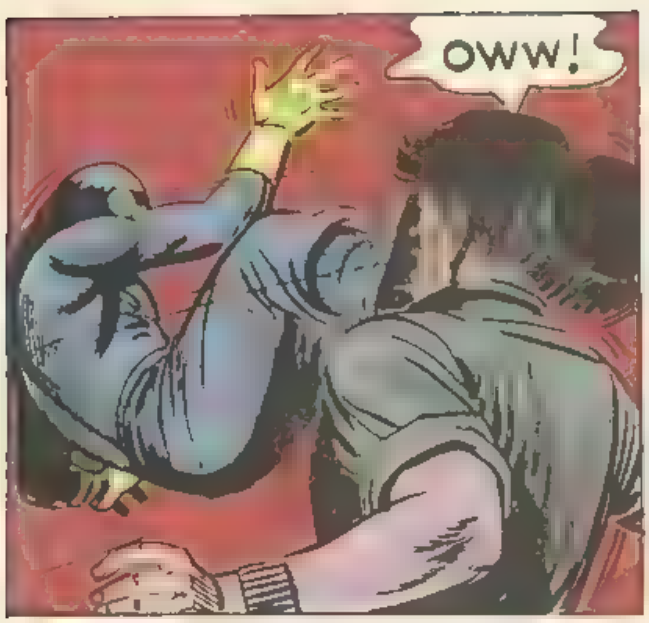

BOYS! BOYS! ACT LIKE GENTLEMEN!
WAIT TILL YOU SEE WHO WAS SPYING ON US, MISS HARSHLY!

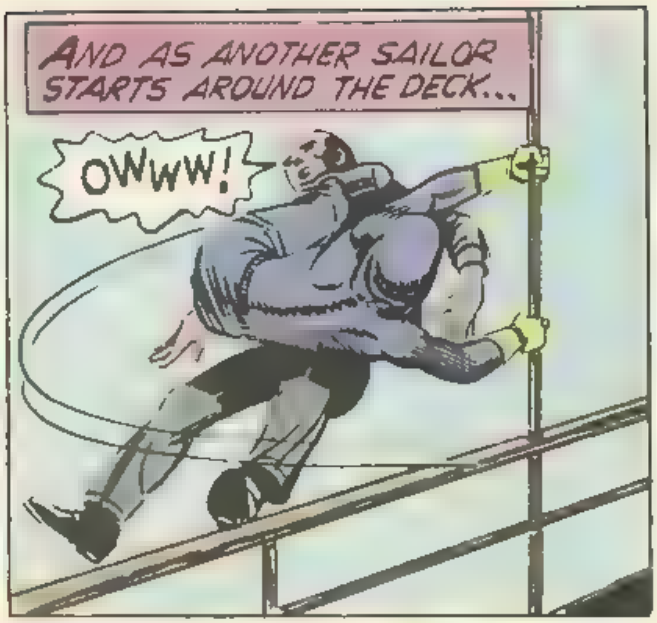
AH! OUR CHARMING REPORTER! WELL, LET'S HELP HER SEE THE TANKER BURN FROM CLOSE RANGE SO SHE CAN WRITE A FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT OF IT— IF SHE SURVIVES!

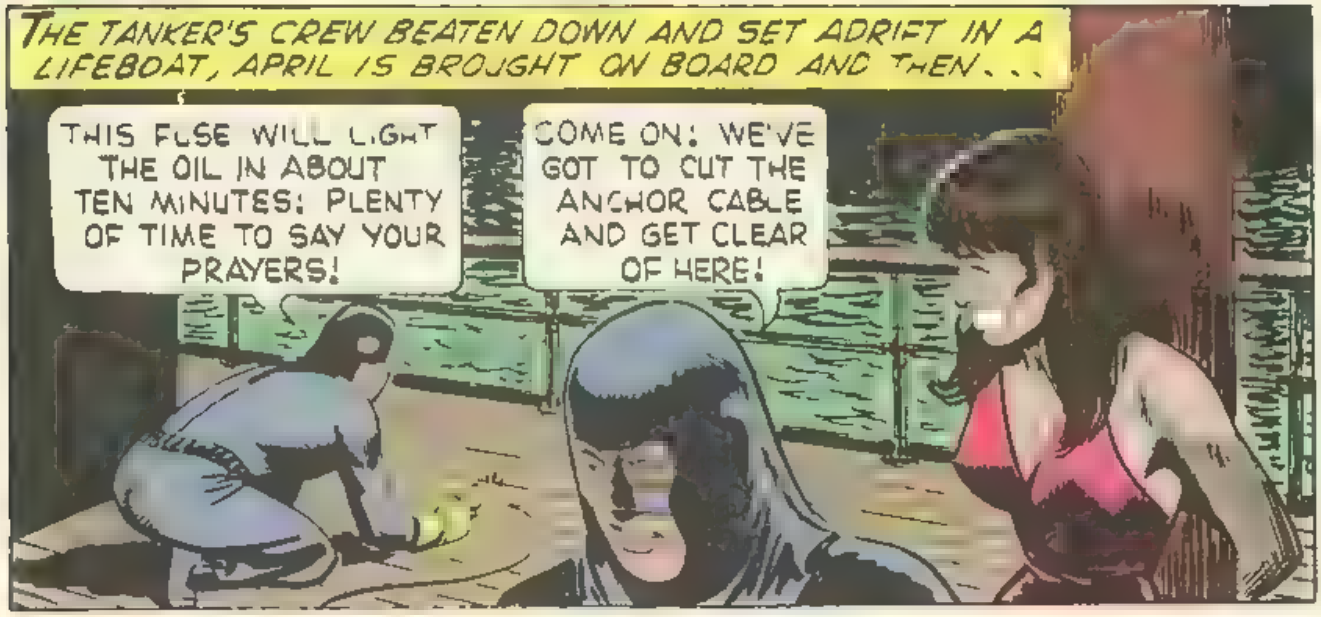

MINUTES LATER, TWO SWIMMERS NEAR THE ANCHORED OIL TANKER...
AFTER THE DISCUS, THIS IS AN EASY SHOT!

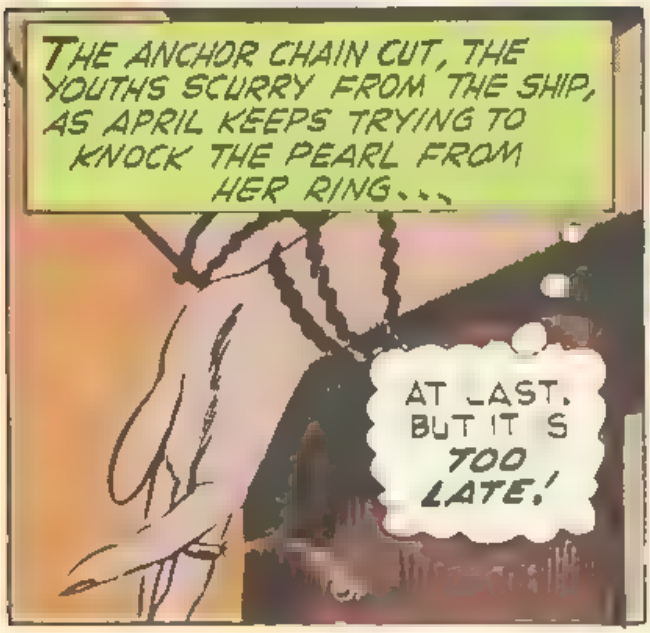

THE MAGNET'S HOLDING! CLIMB UP!

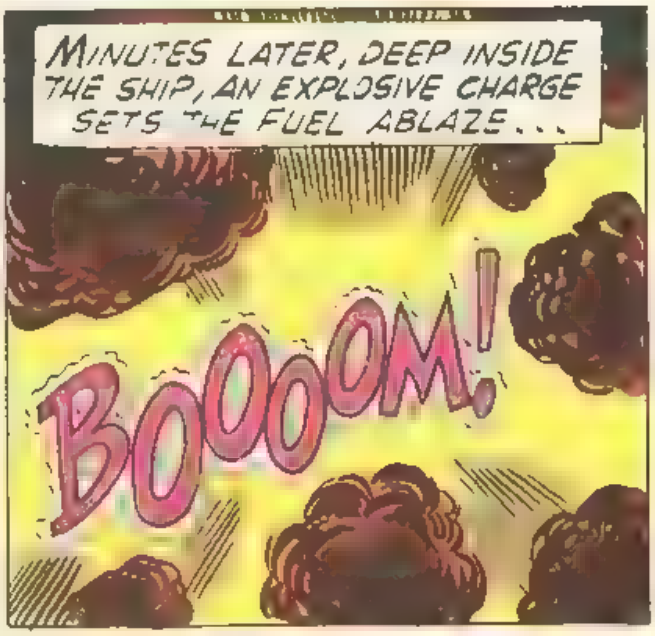
HERE'S THE STERN WATCH! TAKE HIM.

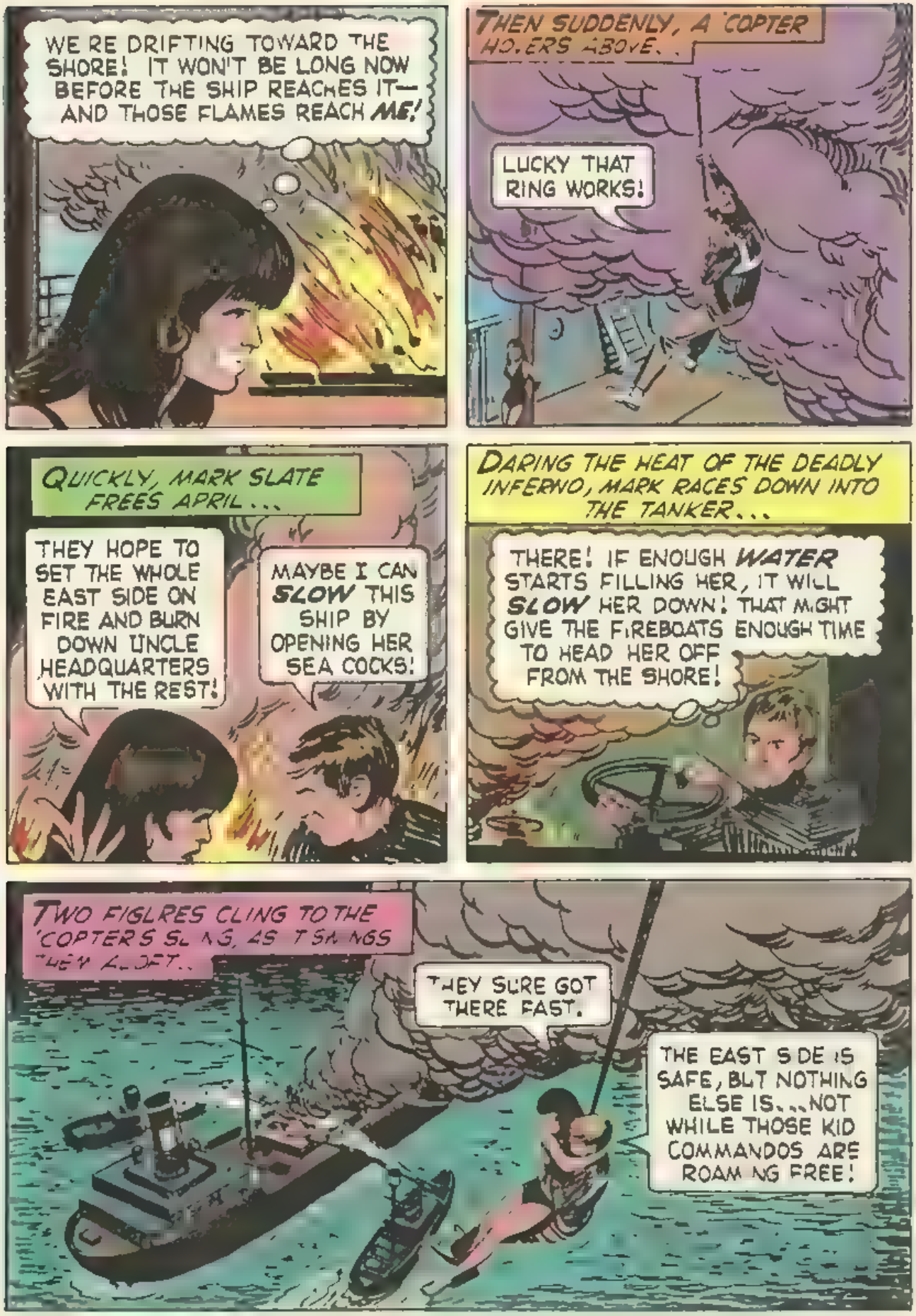

OWW!


AND AS ANOTHER SAILOR STARTS AROUND THE DECK...
OWWW!


THE TANKER'S CREW BEATEN DOWN AND SET ADRIFT IN A LIFEBOAT, APRIL IS BROUGHT ON BOARD AND THEN...
THIS FUSE WILL LIGHT THE OIL IN ABOUT TEN MINUTES: PLENTY OF TIME TO SAY YOUR PRAYERS!
COME ON: WE'VE GOT TO CUT THE ANCHOR CABLE AND GET CLEAR OF HERE!


THE ANCHOR CHAIN CUT, THE YOUTHS SCURRY FROM THE SHIP, AS APRIL KEEPS TRYING TO KNOCK THE PEARL FROM HER RING...
AT LAST. BUT IT S TOO LATE!


MINUTES LATER, DEEP INSIDE THE SHIP, AN EXPLOSIVE CHARGE SETS THE FUEL ABLAZE...
BOOOOM!


WE RE DRIFTING TOWARD THE SHORE! IT WON'T BE LONG NOW BEFORE THE SHIP REACHES IT— AND THOSE FLAMES REACH ME!
THEN SUDDENLY, A 'COPTER HOVERS ABOVE..
LUCKY THAT RING WORKS!
QUICKLY, MARK SLATE FREES APRIL...
THEY HOPE TO SET THE WHOLE EAST SIDE ON FIRE AND BURN DOWN UNCLE HEADQUARTERS WITH THE REST!
MAYBE I CAN SLOW THIS SHIP BY OPENING HER SEA COCKS!
DARING THE HEAT OF THE DEADLY INFERNO, MARK RACES DOWN INTO THE TANKER...
THERE! IF ENOUGH WATER STARTS FILLING HER, IT WILL SLOW HER DOWN! THAT MIGHT GIVE THE FIREBOATS ENOUGH TIME TO HEAD HER OFF FROM THE SHORE!
TWO FIGURES CLING TO THE 'COPTER'S SLING, AS IT SWINGS THEM ALOFT..
THEY SURE GOT THERE FAST.
THE EAST SIDE IS SAFE, BUT NOTHING ELSE IS...NOT WHILE THOSE KID COMMANDOS ARE ROAMING FREE!

CHECKING THE BORROWED YACHT AND FINDING IT ABANDONED AND WITHOUT ANY SIGNIFICANT MATERIAL LEFT BEHIND, THEY FLY ON TO THE SCHOOL...
MARK, LOOKS LIKE WE BOTH GOT HERE AT THE SAME TIME!
512
S-SHE ESCAPED. BOYS, YOU FAILED ONCE—DON'T FAIL THIS TIME.
QUICK, MARK. THE SAFE WE WANT TO OPEN IS IN THE LIBRARY!
THIS WAY...
THOSE KIDS ARE TOO FAST FOR US. THEY'RE GAINING!
USE THEIR SPEED TO BEAT THEM, MARK.
H-HEY!
TWO DOWN... BUT TOO MANY TO GO!
PILE ON THEM!

ALL TOGETHER NOW, MARK—PULL!
HELP!
LET'S SHOW THEM THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY GYMNASTS HERE!
GOT YOUR IDEA! RIGHT IN THE SWING OF IT!
YEOOOW!
OOOFF!
THAT'S CUT DOWN ON THE ODDS, BUT THEY'RE STILL A LOT OF HEALTHY LITTLE VILLAINS LEFT!
OKAY, KIDS, PLAY-TIME'S OVER. LINE UP!
I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK THE EMERGENCY BAND WASN'T WORKING AND THAT YOU'D NEVER GET HERE!
MISS HARSHLY WASN'T IN THE GYM! AND THERE'S A LIGHT ON IN THE LIBRARY! HURRY!

SHE'S TRYING TO BURN PAPERS...
I'LL STOP HER!
OOOFF!!
TOO BAD YOU'RE NOT IN AS GOOD SHAPE AS YOUR STUDENTS!
HARSHLY WAS AN AGENT FOR THRUSH WHO FINANCED THIS SCHOOL!
THE INCIDENTS AT THE ICBM BASE AND THE PRISON WERE WARM-UPS FOR SETTING THE EAST SIDE ON FIRE!
WELL, MISS HARSHLY, I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU FOR INDOCTRINATING OUR FINEST YOUNG ATHLETES TO DO THRUSH'S DIRTY WORK— BUT NOW, SCHOOL IS OUT!

Self Defence for U.N.C.L.E Girls

Pat Butler, 4th Dan Black Belt, Secretary and Senior Coach, Amateur Judo Association, author *Your Book of Self-Defence* and *Judo and Self-Defence for Women and Girls*, **etc., talks about the rules and pitfalls.**

A *Opponent grabs you round the throat . . .*

B *. . . put your three first fingers together and poke your opponent hard in the throat.*

April Dancer uses her brain and charm to avoid many difficult situations, but sometimes the only way out of a tight corner is the use of her wide knowledge of self-defence techniques, some of which are shown here. April never resorts to self-defence unless there is no other way out. This is the Golden Rule: never misuse your self-defence, you may hurt someone and be very sorry afterwards.

However, if you *have* to use the techniques shown here for your own safety then be forceful and quick. Your idea must be to break the hold and run away.

The methods shown in this article are based on Ju-Jutsu, judo, and aikido. Ju-jutsu and aikido are systems of self-defence which were used for many years by Japanese *samurai*—who were rather like our knights of old—before they became more widely known.

Judo, of course, is a sport rather than a pure method of self-defence, and is now taught in many schools in Britain. However, if there is not a club at your school there may well be one in your area. Some clubs teach self-defence as well as judo so it is worth while finding out. Certainly the best way of learning is from a good instructor, but if you cannot find one you will need a partner to practise with who is keen enough to have regular sessions with you.

C *Your attacker grips you round the waist from the front. Put your right hand under the right side of her jaw, your left hand grasping her hair from the back. . . .*

D *Push round and away with your right hand and pull forward and round to your left with your left hand to obtain a release.*

RULES FOR SAFETY

When you are learning self-defence at home it is quite essential to have just as firm safety rules as those applied in a club. The very first rule you must remember is that when you practise you must arrange a signal with your partner for obtaining an immediate release from a lock or hold. The best signal is a quick double tap on your own body or that of your partner. If it is not possible to tap, then shout 'okay'. In either case your partner must release you straight away. You, in your turn, must let your partner go immediately she or he submits.

The second rule is never try to see how long you can resist a lock before giving in. The reason for this is that sometimes you may think that 'this is not hurting too much, I'll not give in', only to find that your partner increases the pressure which may injure you before you have a chance to give in.

Rule three is never to apply a lock or hold with a jerk. Here again there is a chance that injury could be caused.

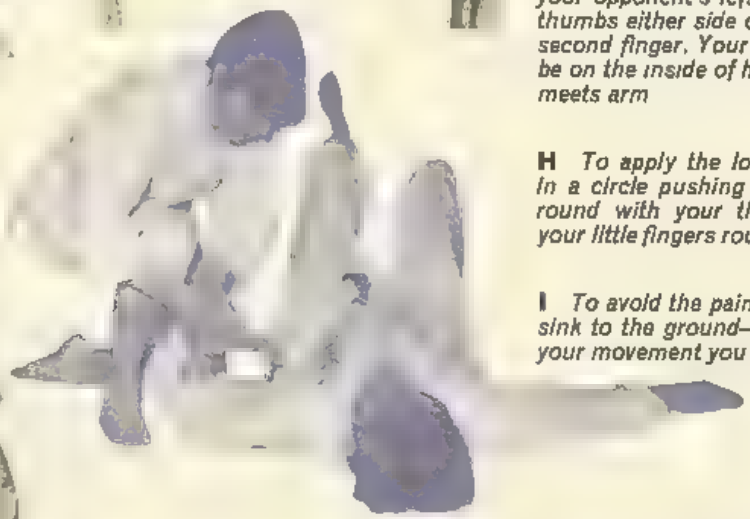
Lastly, your fourth rule, when trying kicks or pokes only indicate the point where your kick is intended to land. In other words do not aim a hard kick at, say, the knee; aim it to stop a few inches in front. Yet again we have another safety measure.

E *Both your wrists are held. . . .*

F *. . . tucking your elbows into your sides, simply rotate your wrists in a circle against the thumbs of your opponent. However strong your opponent's thumb your wrist will be stronger.*

G *Aikido is another deadly art. Take your opponent's left wrist and put your thumbs either side of the knuckle of his second finger. Your little fingers should be on the inside of his wrist where hand meets arm*

H *To apply the lock turn your hands in a circle pushing forward, down and round with your thumbs and turning your little fingers round, up towards you.*



I *To avoid the pain your opponent will sink to the ground—if you are quick in your movement you may throw him.*

J *Follow him down and trap him by putting his wrist directly over his elbow, fingers pointing towards his chest. If he does not give in as you increase the pressure he may suffer injury to his wrist.*

The clothes that you wear for self-defence do not, unless you are at a club, have to be special. In the photographs most of the young people are wearing judo kit, but a tee-shirt or sweater and jeans or shorts will do just as well. Try not to wear anything too tight that may tend to restrict your movements.

As you progress you will be able to apply the movements quickly, but at first you should content yourse f with getting the movement correct; speed will come with practice.

Remember that the best defence is to be inoffensive. Do not start or get into fights; try to avoid them. If you have to use the methods taught to avoid serious injury to yourself, then only use enough force to escape.

Should you want to learn judo or self-defence then I will be pleased to put you in touch with your nearest club if you send a stamped addressed envelope to: The Secretary, Amateur Judo Association of Great Britain, 32, Fairdene Road, Coulsdon, Surrey.

The photographs for this article have been taken from Pat Butler's books *Your Book of Self-Defence* 18s. and *Judo and Self-Defence for Women and Girls* 30s., both published by Faber and Faber by whose courtesy they appear.

K *Opponent grabs you round the waist from the rear. Quickly bend your knees and take hold of the nearest of her ankles with both hands. . .*

L *. . . Quickly pull hard forward and up on her ankle, throwing her back.*

M *Opponent grips your shoulder or lapel. Quickly grasp her wrist with both hands. . . .*

N *Put your right hand over your opponent's elbow, pushing down as you control the elbow. With your left hand pull up on her wrist. You now have a painful arm lock applied.*

O *Step back with your left foot pulling her left wrist towards you as you do so.*

Frankly Feminine

A journey down fashion's flairpath....

Butterick 4944 Price in U K 5s 0d Available in Misses' sizes 8 to 16 A romantic dress with a slightly gathered skirt emphasising the defined waistline The low neckline is edged with contrasting ruffles which are repeated at the cuffs Suitable for parties in velveteen with lace ruffles or for daytime in a lightweight wool with short sleeves and without the ruffles

Butterick 4940 Price in U K 5s 6d Available in Misses sizes 8 to 16 Ultra-fashionable maxi-length dress with long, cuffed sleeves and high collar Dressed up for more formal occasions with frothy lace bib and contrasting belt to accentuate the waistline Back zip opening

It takes a bold fashion expert indeed to predict exactly what we will all be wearing in the months ahead. Fashion is so fickle. While we walk about in mini-skirts and with closely cropped hair, along come the fashion magazines with new ideas about maxi-lengths and curly corkscrew hairstyles! Who knows, by this time next year we may all be in crinolines and wearing wigs Not that crinolines would be very practical. Can you imagine trying to crowd into the tube, or being packed tight on a bus, wearing a voluminous skirt down to your ankles?

But one thing fashion experts agree on is that there is going to be a return to prettiness, with small bodices and waists back with a vengeance, skirts softly gathered or gently flaring. Yes, the look is all set to be very feminine . . . so exit the beanpole figure, welcome the return of the 'pretty girl' look.

The way to dress

Clothes will have lots of shape and movement, with waists clearly defined, and many softly belted. Add to this lots of frills, swinging soft pleats, especially from the hips, and plenty of cleverly cut, flared skirts.

This year could well see the last of the mini-skirts. Hems will gradually creep down, levelling out to perhaps two or three inches above the knee. Mid-calf lengths will grow more popular, maxi-lengths will be strictly cold weather clothes, rising again a little with the first breath of spring.

One trend that is reflected again and again in next season's styles is towards the demure, 'little girl' look of Victorian times, with frills in profusion everywhere. Man-made materials have taken the drudgery out of laundering frills, so we can expect to see many plain blouses and simply cut dresses adorned with delicious froths of lace on sleeves, round necklines and cuffs and down the fronts of bodices.

It's NICER to die in BED

ACT I

"IF only the McGoy trail hadn't fizzled out at that airport," complained April Dancer. "And what an airport! Why it must run at least *two* flights to the Continent a week. Imagine!" She glanced at her wristwatch and sighed impatiently. "Another six hours before we are to contact Mr. Waverly again. I suppose he needs that interval to recover from our failure."

"Relax! We can't succeed every time; it'd be dull if we did." Mark Slate grinned at his fellow-agent as he took the deserted hump-backed bridge with a wicked spurt. "Enjoy the English scenery."

"Scenery!" April Dancer's forehead rose incredulously under her long dark fringe.

"The Channel."

"An occasional grey glimpse between oil storage tanks and coal wharves."

"Boats."

"I've seen the tips of three masts! and one dreary patch of shingle littered with antiquated boats for hire. Hardly exciting! Anyway who'd want to spend a Saturday afternoon in mid-winter rowing up that dreary stretch of water?"

"One gentleman apparently," said Mark, drawing up alongside a high wire fence and pointing.

"He doesn't look as if he's enjoying himself," opined April. "In fact I'd say the exertion had sent him to sleep."

Indeed the figure in the pale raincoat and dark hat was slumped forward over oars that were trailing uselessly

Exertion?

The two U.N.C.L.E. agents looked at each other in sudden suspicion. Mark focused his binoculars

"What do you think, April?"

"I'd say he had collapsed or he was dead."

Mark turned the car sharply back along the road to where a chalked notice advertised "Boats for Hire—Pleasure or Fishing—4/6 an hour". The two agents jumped the last of the concrete steps that zig-zagged steeply down the grassy bank. The wooden cabin at the bottom was deserted; so was the rest of the shingle except for the boats, some with anchors and some without, but all with decaying yellow cushions and oars

Mark noted the coins that had been left on the windowsill, and gave the boat *Moonshine*, which April had dragged down to the water's edge, a final thrust. They both leapt in

The harbour seemed deserted except for two youths fishing and a crane lifting coal from a boat on the opposite wharf. Reflections of gulls flittered darkly on the water. Four swans rose, and, barely clearing the lock gates some way ahead, disappeared towards the river mouth.

The U.N.C.L.E. agents drew alongside the drifting boat, and April put out a steadying hand before lightly transferring to it.

"Well!" demanded Mark anxiously.

"Dead! Looks like the exertion was too much for his heart"

Death from natural causes was something they rarely encountered during their eventful careers. Gently, expertly, with a gloved hand, April searched for something that would reveal the man's identity.

Nothing in the pockets of his dark, good quality suit. Nothing in the nearest pocket of his unbuttoned raincoat. Strangely, not a key or wallet even

She turned—deliberately last—to the inner pocket of his raincoat out of which the man's hand was half-drawn, and completed the action which death had interrupted. Clutched in the chilling, stiffening fingers was a wad of £10 notes. In the long capacious pocket—a kind much favoured by packpockets and shoplifters, except the man had the wrong shaped fingers!—she found other wads

She laid them out in the bottom of the boat.

"One thousand pounds," she whistled. "Now why should a middle-aged man be out in a harbour with nothing but £10 notes in his pocket?"

Mark looked around. There were other boats of course, oil tankers, timber boats, but the nearest was anchored alongside a wharf beyond the lock gates. Nowhere was there any sign that anybody had noticed *their* activities, let alone the man's prior to his death

"The cushion, April." Mark pointed to a worn slit in the edge of the water-stained cushion tumbled over the man's highly polished shoes.

April inserted her first and second fingers, scissor-fashion, and triumphantly extracted a folded pamphlet.

"It's details of an auction being held in a place called Hockley this afternoon," she said. "Galius Wyre & Sons, the Fembridge Auction Rooms. . . . Hey, didn't we pass a signpost to Hockley some way back?"

Mark nodded, holding out impatiently twitching fingers for the pamphlet. "Item 73—one genuine eighteenth-century bed with hand-carved oak posts and original hand-stitched linen bedding—has been ticked, then crossed off," he said.

"That all?"

"Fraid so. But I wonder why?" he pondered, as he hitched the two boats together, and began pulling back strongly to the hire beach. "I mean why was our dead friend interested in that item. . . ."

"And then not interested?" ended April wryly. "Maybe he just couldn't make the auction if he had an assignation out here."

"I wonder with whom?"

A bullet answered him—hardly adequately—from the boat cabin. Mark and April flung themselves flat. Other bullets bit into the prow of the *Moonshine*: two imbedded themselves in the slumped figure behind. Mark raised himself a fraction to take aim, provoking another flow of shot.

"Wonder if he's alone?" said Mark, and leaving the two boats to take their chance, he flung himself full-length on to the shingle behind the upturned *Fancy Free* April, taking cover in like fashion behind the *Donegal Lass*, heard his cry as a clenched fist came down upon his unsuspecting skull, and a bent knee crunched his body deeper into the shingle.

April squirmed herself into a position from where she could be ready for Mark's assailant, while still keeping a wary eye on the cabin from which was cautiously emerging a red-jacketed figure in gold-tasselled boots and a peaked cap. A dancing fire cracker of shots sent the figure speedily back for shelter.

Just in time she sensed the clenched fist above her, and hurled herself violently backwards against a pair of pale-trousered legs. Her attacker sprawled over her, closing his jaw, which had opened in surprise, with a crack on the side of the *Donegal Lass*.

April, who had neatly somersaulted away, returned to the senseless figure for a moment, and then, dodging the bullets that were ricocheting over the stones around her, crawled to Mark. Dazedly he was rubbing his head.

"Retreat of the lone warrior," he muttered, as with contemptuous eyes they watched the red-jacketed figure leg it up the steps to the road.

"Do we leave the dead man?" he inquired.

April nodded. "After all there's nothing to be found on him *now*, is there?" she said.

"Meaning they were after his money?" said Mark, as he locked the wads of £10 notes into the underfloor compartment of the boot.

"They weren't here to wish anyone Bon Voyage." She placed something in his lap.

He regarded it in surprise. "Another auction pamphlet."

She nodded as she switched on the ignition. "In our unconscious assailant's breast pocket, and note: item 73 is ticked off on that, and *not* crossed through.

"Feel like attending the tail-end of an auction?" she inquired.

"If you promise not to drive at more than seventy," he said, tenderly protecting the throbbing spot where his assailant's fist had fallen.

ACT II

Hockley, fortunately, was nearer than they had hoped, and the Fembridge Auction Rooms was at the nearest end of the meandering main street.

The goods, including the eighteenth-century oak bed, the doorman informed them, were stored in the enormous basement under the auction room, and there the public inspected them beforehand.

Both agents, while not appearing to be particularly interested, watched with very great interest indeed who, out of the crowd, would emerge as bidders for item 73. One, a slumberous-faced man, dropped out as soon as the bidding went beyond a hundred pounds A querulous-voiced man and a strident-voiced woman carried on. When the price halted at three hundred pounds, the slumberous-faced man struck in again, and, with a flourish of his hammer, the auctioneer pronounced it going, going, gone.

As the crowd surged out, Mark and April parted, Mark to loiter near the platform, where the slumberous-faced man was talking with one of the clerks and April to slip down to the basement, in hope of a glimpse of the bed.

A voice called out loudly over the giant sprawl of goods and rolled carpets: "Lot 73, Phil. Gentleman's having it collected right away. Get it into the passage ready."

A moment later April beckoned Mark eagerly. "You good at re-tying knots?"

He looked puzzled, and she dragged him into the passage, which opened into a cobbled yard. The roll-shuttered door had already been raised in readiness for the van that was to collect the bed. Beside the bed stood a giant dumpling of yellowing linen.

Every secret agent knows that hair is the crowning glory Keep it healthy, and lustrous by using one of the many conditioners now on the market Experiment and change your style regularly not only is it good for the hair but that way you'll confuse the enemy too!

"I'll hide in there," April told him. "I'm light! they won't suspect. You keep the van in sight if you can, but anyway I'll keep my radio signal working so you can follow us. Okay?"

He nodded. "One way of entering the enemy camp," he agreed. "I'd say this chap was rather eager to get his bed home, wouldn't you?"

"At least there's no sign of our peak-capped friend," whispered April, as she curled up appropriately small

Mark left the Auction Rooms by the front entrance, having carefully re-tied the knots of the slightly bigger bundle of bedding. He halted his car in the main street, opposite the turning from which the van must emerge and, to deceive anyone who might be interested, he kept an impatient eye on the telephone box a few yards ahead where a girl in a minute leather skirt and cape was holding an everlasting conversation.

A large puce van, with the name of the previous owner painted out in a black streak, thrust its blunt nose into the main street, and turned the way April and Mark had originally come. Mark, cheered by the signals coming from the bundle in the back of the van, prepared to follow. But he had not reckoned on a second larger van following the first, nor on the lady in the leather cape taking it into her head at that moment to finish her conversation and step out directly in front of him. He stopped abruptly, thereby starting a concertina action behind, from which, having no other course unless he were to lose April altogether, he simply had to flee. Not a traffic light helped him.

Cocooned inside the bundle, April was having a lonely, but comfortable journey Suddenly the van stopped, and she realised the doors at the back were being opened.

"Don't think we need the bedding, Andy."

"Noah."

There was a burst of laughter, and a startled April suddenly realised the linen dumpling was being lifted out. Intuitively she switched off her radio in case either of the men suspected anything From the awkwardness with which the bundle was being carried, she guessed the way to be narrow. Once she was certain she heard a gull's cries.

"No sense keeping what we don't want, eh, Andy?"

"Noah!"

Another guffaw, and then, with increasing violence, the dumpling was swung backwards, forwards ...

"Going, going, gone," shouted the men, and as the dumpling hit the water, one of them turned and peppered it with bullets

ACT III

The sudden cut-out of April's signal made Mark keep his eyes apprehensively alert as he increased speed along the harbour road. Since his belated start from Hockley he had had no sight of the van. His fellow-agent, he knew, would be answering his radio calls if she could. So what had happened? His car leapt at the hump-backed bridge like a steeplechaser taking a fence

No sign of anything untoward. On his one side a line of derelict houses; the street lamps, as he flashed by, flickering light over their shattered upper windows. Glimpses of darkening water on the other bored by palpitating rods of amber light Suddenly the shingle widened out from the road itself, revealing the harbour mouth with its alternately flashing red and green lights. Mark saw timber stacked high on a far wharf, and the boat that had brought it standing high in the water now, and sending up dark smoke from its

white-topped funnel against the crimson-streaked sky. A light winked in the radio control tower at he end of a jetty.

Then walls blocked his view again. Nothing along here to give him a reason for April's silence.

Several miles further on, where the road branched in treble confusion to Flayford, Wotley and Neetham, he saw a dark figure on the grassy island stooping over a scooter.

A district nurse lifted an inquiring face as he pulled abreast to ask which of the roads a puce van might have taken

"Two chaps with a bed for *The Poplars*?"

Mark resisted an urge to kiss her.

"They stopped to ask me the way. I could direct you there if you'd give me a lift," she said, wiping oily hands "This damned scooter! Always gives me trouble after it's been serviced. Trouble is the General won't eat his tea till he's had his second injection Such a moaner he is. Moans about his injections! moans about his diet. . . . As if his present bed isn't comfortable enough! Pampered, that's what he is."

She actually paused for breath as they drove between the high belt of poplars that made a natural wall about the house.

" 'Fraid you've missed the van. Obviously been and gone. Are you coming inside?" she inquired.

"I'll wait for you," Mark offered gallantly. She seemed harmless enough, but you never knew. No sense in going through the front door if he could make a less obvious entrance

"That's the General's room," she confided, as she bundled out on to the gravel. "He can't manage the stairs now, poor dear."

Mark noted the curtained, dimly lit window, and the dark windows either side of it.

His passenger turned to wave. "Trouble is," she whispered hoarsely, "I always have to take a glass of blackberry cordial in the library first."

Mark grimaced sympathetically, and the moment she had disappeared inside *The Poplars*, and therefore silence reigned, he was legging it over the sill of one of the long, conveniently low windows. It was hardly likely, he reasoned, that anybody would have had time to transfer the General to his new bed already. *If* that was . . . Mark peered out into a picture-lined passage. Afar off the chink of glasses, and one of the nurse's nerve-dislocating laughs.

Cautiously Mark lifted the flap of the next keyhole and applied a curious eye. No patient, military or otherwise, in bed. Nothing in the room at all in fact but the bed. . . Mark entered softly, his anxiety quickening as he saw that there was no dumpling of yellowing sheets either, and therefore no April Dancer.

Mark returned to the passage, shamelessly intent on eavesdropping The nurse, her garrulity seemingly increased by the effects of the blackberry cordial, was heartily relating the details of some unfortunate woman's plastic stomach.

With a shudder of sympathy for her listener, Mark returned to the bed. Perhaps, he realised, running sensitive fingers over the carved posts, the General had been merely stowed away in another room. Or had the bed been brought here for a darker purpose?

It was well-carved but hardly of such excellence that it could be coveted for itself alone. Something concealed within it then? Mark flashed his torch over the rhyme on the bedhead to read it better:

"Oh it's great to roam,
And great to fight,
And great to lie beneath the night,
On foreign loam
But nicer still, I wage my head,
To die upon thine own dear bed."

ACT IV

He winced unbelievingly, and read it again. Then he felt every letter, pressing, turning, but none moved Then he tapped gently about the letters The knobs that formed the dots above the i's! The fifth knob, patiently manipulated, came out like a tapering peg. Mark flashed his torch inside. Nothing! He inserted his little finger. It came out dusty. He tried the jutting tops of the capitals, and the ledge that formed the top of the capital 'I' now swung aside, and from the stem of the 'I', he removed a brass tube. It had been

a container for something all right, but all that it was filled with now was a mess of black gritty ash. Destroyed microfilm? He surveyed the little heap on his notebook disappointedly.

"So *you* didn't find anything more interesting either?" purred a voice "A pity. We were hoping you would."

Mark sprung round. The iron rod in the slumberous man's hand sent his revolver spinning.

"You were wrong after all, my dear," the man remarked.

"T49 said two U.N.C.L.E. agents were after the Bendish Papers, which —catch this for a laugh! they thought T49 had got."

The woman's garrulity and pleasantness, like most of her nurse's uniform, had gone.

T49. THRUSH agent McGoy! So THRUSH had not stolen the diagrams and test results of the Bendish Rock Dissolving Apparatus after all, but like U.N.C.L.E. were seeking them. Or rather seeking the copies of the originals. Borrowed from the S.G.D.I. Department by whom then if not THRUSH? A member of the staff? The previous owner of the carved bed?

Mark suddenly remembered the dead man in the rowing boat. Him?

"It is obvious, my dear," drawled the man, "from the expressions of dawning realisation on Mr. Slate's face that he knows—if anything—less than we ourselves."

"In that case," said the woman, drawing a piece of fine cord and a stick from her pocket, "he is of no further use to us."

Covered by Mark's own revolver, which her companion was holding, the woman came towards Mark

"It is a long time since I had the pleasure of garrotting anybody," she said

ACT V

The captain of the timber boat *Travvlagge* watched the return of his two men across the darkening water with impatient, narrowed eyes. If that ghostly ball, which he had ordered them to retrieve off the end of the jetty, contained what he suspected. . . .

"Get the thing up here and into my cabin," he shouted

"It is heavy, captain."

"Are you so fragile you cannot handle a body between you?" sneered the captain.

The jaws of the two men, as they looked at the sodden bundle in the bottom of the little boat, dropped. Indeed it *was* squirming. . . . Hurriedly they got it aboard and, as directed, into the cabin, whereupon the captain drew a revolver.

"Untie the knots," he ordered The men felt the hairs upon their hands crawling as they did so.

"Now go." The captain locked the door, and turned to the bundle. "All right, the sheets saved you from their bullets. Somehow you managed to stay alive," he bullied. "Crawl out then."

"I'm not given to crawling, captain." A very wet, and very cold April Dancer rose, with a minimum amount of swaying considering how long she had been curled up, to her feet.

The captain's jaw gaped now.

"You wouldn't, I suppose," suggested April, stung to sarcasm by his delay, "have anything aboard like a dry jersey or a towel?"

"I might have," said the captain, "if you've got something for me. £1000 perhaps?"

ACT VI

Mark nursed first his neck into which the cord had bitten a patterned purple ring, and then his knuckles which in rapid succession had encountered the slumberous man's iron rod, his jaw, the bedpost, and then been spitefully stamped upon by

the woman's boots a moment before he had laid her—most ungallantly—in the wide fireplace for a longer slumber than she normally took at that hour on a Saturday

He was about to make a last despairing effort to contact April by radio before searching every room in the house for her when his own radio began bleeping cheerily.

"April!" His voice managed a croak of joy. "Where've you been?"

"To the bottom of the harbour! Listen! I'm a prisoner in one of the curtained cabins aboard the timber boat *Travvlagge*, which is sailing for its home port—or so the captain says—in four hours. The captain is concerned about a missing thousand pounds"

"Not a secret rock dissolving formula or anything like that?" pressed Mark.

"No." April said with some concern: "Mark, remember it's you and me who are worried about that. And Mr Waverly," she added, with a gulp of apprehension.

"And THRUSH!"

"Well I know that. Why are you. . . ?"

"Explain when I rescue you. Now about that money. . . ."

"Well, I gather the man who had the heart attack or whatever it was in the boat—his name was Uir by the way—was on his way to *this* boat. The £1000 was his passage money. Unfortunately he didn't seem to be trusting anybody. That's why he set out to row to the lock gates a long time before the captain was expecting him. Maybe he thought the captain might set men to waylay him. Maybe he thought somebody else was after him. I don't know."

"So?" urged Mark.

April did not betray her surprise by even a gasp when the captain firmly removed the pen-like radio to his own lips. "Why not join us, Mr. er. . . ?"

"Slate"

"We shall be charmed to have your company for our farewell supper."

"What's on the menu?"

"One thousand pounds? Then we need not serve up your delightful companion—cold!"

"See you in time for the soup," promised Mark.

ACT VII

The captain had said he would have a boat waiting for Mark off the jetty, and indeed he had. Therefore, reasoned Mark, he was doubtless expecting him to sneak secretly across by the public path over the lock gates, and doubtless had a couple of men posted there, too. It would be much safer, if colder, to swim. He pulled on his diving suit. One good thing about U.N.C.L.E. was the way they provided one collapsible version of everything in a suitcase! And, of course, he must take a suit for April.

He slid into the dark, oily water. If April was bound, as by now she undoubtedly was, had she managed to put a sticker on her cabin window? He doubted it. Nothing was going easily.

Mark reached the wharf opposite the shingle without incident, and leaving his flippers with April's suit concealed a little way off, he approached the stern of the *Travvlagge* on bare feet. Naturally the captain hadn't left the gangplank down. Mark climbed the side of the timber ship and dropped silently on to the deck.

A number of the portholes were curtained; one bore a tiny glittering sticker. Good girl, he grinned. Then up again, and poised like a giant gull, he began working on the porthole glass.

Suddenly he became aware of a face watching him interestedly from the next porthole.

"You should have shouted you had arrived, Mr. Slate I would have had you piped aboard."

Then the captain roared for his remaining men. Mark was aware of a dark figure below, and laid it flat as he jumped. Another leapt at him with a knife Mark sent him spinning deckwards; the knife was still spinning when the man lay still. The captain was waiting for him at the top of the gangway, but he was too used to giving orders; his muscles had grown lazy and he was no match for the agile U.N.C.L.E. agent. Mark left him patterning his own cabin carpet, and quickly untied April.

"Quick, the boat is coming back from the jetty," he reported.

"Tell me, Mark," whispered April, as she pulled on her suit, "if that captain offered to carry you, a defector, to his home port for £1000, what would you expect him to do?"

"Pocket my money and dump me in the briny *en route*."

"Exactly. So did Uir. So he wasn't carrying only his £1000, I reason."

"But that's it. He was! Not even a key, remember?"

April shook her head, stubbornly unconvinced. "He'd stuffed the

auction pamphlet in the cushion; he was trying to get the money out of his pocket. . . . I think he'd already thrown the most important item he was carrying overboard: (*a*) in case the police picked him up ill, perhaps senseless; (*b*) in case the captain's boys did."

"April, I'm certain and so was THRUSH—that the microfilm of the Bendish Apparatus had been destroyed in that brass tube."

"Uir wasn't going to travel to his destination empty-handed. Despite what the captain says, I think Uir was going to be dropped off at some *other* port! To ensure he got there he had to have something that would interest a certain government, something the captain wouldn't find if he went through his luggage. . . ."

"Luggage, April!"

"Exactly. So we dive into the harbour to look for what Uir dropped overboard with his luggage."

"My lungs are already full of oil-water," protested Mark.

"Got your underwater illuminator fixed?" April was unsympathetic.

Scouring the muddy bottom of the harbour was not immediately rewarding: a coil of rope, a rusty tobacco tin containing decomposed lugworms, a half buried bucket.

April flashed success through the sluggish, icy water. An anchored suitcase, and not long immersed!

ACT VIII

They were set upon as they staggered from the water. Two jerseyed men sent Mark straight back into it, a third wrested the suitcase from April, and only let go of it when another figure appeared and knocked it from his grasp with an iron rod. April tried to fight off the woman whose hands were tight about her neck, but she was hampered by her flippers.

"Not here!" said the slumberous-faced man hoarsely, and suddenly she and Mark were thrust into another waiting car.

Mark's eyes flashed his disgust. THRUSH!

The woman had the suitcase open

"It's Uir's," she said excitedly "Look, here's his British passport. The copies of the Bendish Papers must be in here! He deliberately left that burnt microfilm in his bed to foil us."

She ravaged among the neatly packed contents, tossing interleaving tissue and enveloping polythene on to the floor. Pyjamas, socks, vests, shirts, handkerchiefs. . . . It was no good: the wooden bowl contained only shaving soap; the tube of toothpaste only toothpaste; the flowered canister only best Ceylon tea. . . .

"There must be something," ground the man "He wouldn't have destroyed the copies he made."

"He knew *they* were beginning to suspect him. He knew *we* were on his trail. He might have panicked."

"We know he panicked!"

The woman sent a shower of handkerchiefs over the seat. "There is nothing."

"Er, could we have the suitcase back then, do you think?" queried April. "After you've finished tearing the lining out, of course."

The woman bundled everything

back into the wrecked case, not bothering this time with interleaving tissue or enveloping polythene, or even about fastening the locks. Ordering the man to stop on the old bridge that spanned the Flayford River, she jumped out and tossed everything into the high water. April and Mark got out, too, and watched the clothing separate, and arms and legs spread out, and float despairingly towards the sea.

"Now *you*," spat the woman, but Mark and April ducked the descending iron rod and dived to the safety of the water themselves.

"Do you think we'll ever get warm or dry again?" shivered Mark, as they dared come ashore some quarter of a mile up river.

April waved one of Uir's white handkerchiefs under his dripping nose. "I kept it dry," she said triumphantly.

"What for? To signal our surrender to Mr. Waverly?" he chattered.

She did not bother him with the handkerchief again till he was indeed warm and dry and they were both in their hotel room, awaiting the moment at which they must contact U.N.C.L.E. headquarters in New York.

"Mighty pleased Mr Waverly will be with us!" sneezed Mark.

"I'm sure he'll be delighted." April meant it. "Watch!" She held out the large white handkerchief towards the electric fire. "Be patient!"

"A diagram is appearing." Mark's voice was excited and incredulous. "A part of the Bendish Rock Dissolving Apparatus?"

April snatched back the handkerchief and quickly swished it in a bowl of water. "All gone! Clever Mr. Uir of the S.G.D.I. Dept. Knowing THRUSH were after him, he copied the papers on to his white linen. Who after all would have suspected his luggage?"

"But why did he have his bed auctioned?" Mark asked.

"Well, my guess is he sold everything he had to try to raise the £1000. He just hadn't time to wait for the proceeds from the bed."

Mark whistled. "Invisible ink for linen. A schoolboy's trick. If only THRUSH knew!"

"And their woman agent tossed it all into the water, so every detail was destroyed. It was the polythene wrappings made me wonder. . . ."

"What a lot of trouble that man would have saved everybody if he had died quietly in his bed," said Mark, fighting back another sneeze. "Or would he?"

"Hello," chirped April. "Open Channel D, please. Mr. Waverly? No, it's true we didn't get McGoy, but. . .'

The eyes have it!

Many of you have no doubt admired Stephanie Powers' performance as April Dancer, her gay clothes, her well-groomed hair, her arresting eyes. Yes, it's all very well for her, you may say, she's a star with a host of beauty experts to guide and advise her. No wonder her make-up always looks perfect in front of the cameras.

But today beauty isn't for just the chosen few. Modern cosmetics, with their ability to camouflage and enhance, have brought beauty within the scope of every girl.

Take eyes for instance: it's easy to make up your own eyes skilfully to make them look larger, more lustrous and lovelier—you just need a little know-how.

In this step by step guide we'll show you how to perfect your eye make-up technique. Prop up your book by the side of the mirror and for the first few times you make up your eyes keep referring to it. You will soon know the routine by heart.

If you are timid about using eye make-up try making up just one eye; now notice the contrast between the made up one and the plain one. You'll find that eye make-up correctly applied emphasizes and flatters your eyes.

A hint before you begin: make sure your eyebrows are properly shaped. Remove unwanted hairs with tweezers, stretching your skin between two fingers and pulling the hairs in the direction of growth. Shape the lower edge first and form an arch above the outer corner of the eye.

Apply foundation and powder round your eyes in the normal way.

Now here's the expert way to put on your eye make-up:

STEP 1

To define your eyebrows first groom them with a clean mascara brush into the neatest possible shape and remove any traces of powder. Your eyebrows should begin directly above the inner corner of the eye as shown.

STEP 2

Using a sharp eyebrow pencil, or brush with compressed eyebrow powder and a feather light touch, make tiny hair-like strokes along the brow from the inner to outer edge. Follow the natural arch and lift the brow slightly at the outer end. Finish by brushing softly with a clean mascara brush for a natural look.

STEP 3

To establish where your eyebrow should end lay your eyebrow pencil in a line from the corner of your nose to the outer corner of your eye as shown. Your brow line should end at the spot where it crosses the pencil.

STEP 4

To shadow your eyelids tilt your chin so that you are looking down into your mirror, exposing most of your upper lid. If you are using a cream shadow apply equal dabs with a finger or brush to the centre of each lid. Then with a clean finger gently pat and blend the colour along the eyelid upwards and outwards towards the outer end of the eyebrow. Eye shadow goes over your foundation and powder, a touch of talc over your shadow will keep it smooth and firm.

STEP 5

Now take your eye liner and work it to a smooth cream with a wet brush, twirling the brush to a fine point. Look down into your mirror again. Then with your free hand gently stretch the skin at the outer corner of the eye. Start at the inner corner and slowly draw a line close to the roots of the upper lashes, extending this slightly beyond the corner of the eye in an upward stroke. Begin thinly, thicken towards the centre and taper away at the outer edge.

STEP 6

To line the lower lid as well tilt your chin down so that you look up into the mirror. Start at the inner corner immediately under the lower lashes and draw a very light thin line ending directly under the outer corner of the eye. Soften it with your finger or brush to form a shadow.

STEP 7

To make-up your eyelashes look down into the mirror again and apply the finishing touch of mascara. Start at the inner corner of your upper lashes. Apply two or three light coats from below and one from above. If you use block mascara, cream it well with a wet brush and apply it with the tips of the bristles. Cream mascara should be squeezed from the tube on to the brush and applied in the same way. If you use a mascara wand, as we show here, rotate it as you make forward and upward strokes through your lashes until every lash is well covered. Finish off with a light coat on top of the lower lashes.

STEP 8

Now you can see the wonderful result achieved by eye make-up expertly applied. Suddenly your eyes are breathtakingly larger with a fascinating depth and sparkle. Go on—flatter yourself now!

Photographs by courtesy of Max Factor Hollywood and London (Sales) Ltd

LOOKS IN FASHION

Fashion dictates not only our clothes but also our hairstyles and make-up. How will the new face of 1969 look?

Well, now that short cropped hairstyles have finally had their day it's an about-turn, back to curly locks and a much prettier, more feminine look for hair. Right back to great grandmother's day we go for that old-fashioned, curly look. If this doesn't suit you, then there's the delightful alternative —bubbly Shirley Temple ringlets and the styles that were all the rage in the 1920s.

The return of these styles heralds a new lease of life for the hairslide, so search out your old slides from childhood; they say keep a thing long enough and it always comes in useful again! If you can't find one, don't worry, most large stores are now carrying good ranges of them.

FLATTERING AND FEMININE

Make-up techniques are changing too. Gone are heavily made-up eyes; in are cupid bow lips. And lipstick colours? In come the bright, cherry shades and definite pink lips; out are the pale, wishy-washy whites of past seasons. For those with good colouring, scarlet lipstick is a winner—a warm, gay colour to brighten up our steely grey skies.

The golden girl look is in, too, with glowing skin left unpowdered.

It's a flattering, feminine look, but it calls for a clear complexion, sparkling with health and vitality: spots and blemishes are definitely out, so don't neglect your nightly skin care.

So, here's to prettiness in 1969!

Hairstyles do an about-turn and after the short cropped styles in comes this much prettier, more feminine curly look—just like great grandmother wore.

They say if you wait long enough every style comes back. This casual ringleted look in two bouncy bunches could have been clipped straight from a 1920s magazine. Yes, ringlets are definitely in.

Hairstyles by Poly.
Photographs by courtesy of Beauty News Service.

The School for Skiing AFFAIR

ACT I

HAD it not been for the seriousness of the assignment, April Dancer, U.N.C.L.E.'s famous agent, could easily have enjoyed herself. Ski-ing was one of her favourite pastimes, and the air and snow around the winter sports resort in Switzerland were beautifully crisp.

But April had not been sent there for the benefit of her health. Three previous agents whom Alexander Waverly, boss of U.N.C.L.E.'s international crime-preventing organisation, had sent to the resort, had mysteriously disappeared. The last one was Mark Slate—April's associate on numerous successful assignments.

"It's almost a week now, Miss Dancer, since we had news from Mr. Slate. I think it is high time you went to investigate." Mr. Waverly had trouble trying to conceal his concern as he briefed April for the trip, back in U.N.C.L.E.'s headquarters.

"We've known for some time that THRUSH were using the ski-school as a cover for their activities. So far as we knew there was nothing revolutionary going on, and we sent the first agent to investigate almost as a routine matter. The fact that he, then a second agent, and then Mr. Slate, all disappeared without trace has put a great deal more significance to THRUSH's motives at the resort. You must go, Miss Dancer, and you must find out."

The ski-school was comfortable, service excellent, attention from the staff exemplary. What April hadn't realised was that, as she checked in at the reception desk the day before,

her arrival had caused a good deal of interest . . . behind the scenes.

A cleverly hidden camera had registered her arrival in an elaborate control room behind the reception lounge. This was routine practice. As the photograph came up on a screen in the control room a special computer gave that particular person security clearance . . . or exposed his or her identity.

April's attractive features had graced the screen and then, almost simultaneously, the words had appeared beneath: *Uncle Agent 17225, April Dancer.*

The hotel manager, Dale Freberg, had witnessed April's arrival with more than passing interest. "First a couple of unimportant agents. Then Mark Slate. Now the delectable April Dancer. My, U.N.C.L.E. must be giving us top rating!"

He turned to the girl standing by his side. "The system as before, Olga my dear. I think that should safely take care of Miss Dancer." He smoothly handsome features relaxed into a slightly evil-looking smile. He slipped his arm around Olga's waist, and two of THRUSH's most notorious and clever agents left the control room.

There was nothing suspect about the ski-school's outward appearances. So far as April could discover, her room wasn't bugged, the guests appeared to be ordinary people, enjoying a winter sports holiday, the food and drink were excellent and everything appeared just as it should be

"It's almost too innocent, sir," announced April to Mr. Waverly over the personal communicator. "There aren't as many clues here as there would be in a genuine ski-school."

"Don't take unnecessary chances, Miss Dancer," instructed Waverly. April smiled sweetly to herself at her boss's concern. Then glowered into the communicator as he continued: "We can't afford to lose any more people!"

ACT II

It was time for the Girl from U.N.C.L.E. to get out to the practice slope. She'd signed on as a beginner wanting instruction, though her excellent form on skis was well known throughout the U.N.C.L.E. organisation.

With about a dozen other enthusiasts she was subjected to the elementary rules of ski-ing from a handsome, athletic instructor called Craig. She became extra cautious when, taking each individual in turn on personal instruction, he contrived to keep April's session until the end. Together they did a practice run, but April had difficulty in hiding her expertise

"You've ski-ed just a *little* before," breezed Craig cheerfully.

April smiled wanly: "Just a little," she mused.

"Let's try the bigger slope," suggested Craig, and April agreed.

As April sped down the exhilaration thrilled her. She hadn't had the opportunity of ski-ing for quite some time and this was great.

Craig had indicated the route, though his instructions for the latter part seemed to take her away from the recognised ski-slope. As the snow dropped away April realised the danger. What had looked like a gentle slope from above had deceived her. The snow dropped away sheer and deep, and a nasty, crippling fall could easily have resulted had April not kept her head and been such an accomplished skier.

As it was, she shifted her balance and was able to reach an intermediary landing. She wrenched her ankle and was ruefully rubbing it when Craig came along, very alarmed and concerned.

"Are you all right?" he shouted.

"Yes, I'm okay," confirmed April. "But you might have told me about this hazard."

"I didn't know—truthfully," Craig insisted.

But now April wasn't too sure about Craig.

ACT III

The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. had never before been accident-prone. The ski-school looked to be changing all that . . . rapidly. The very next day there was a fault in her ski-lift, and April dropped fifteen feet to the ground . . . but again her expert training enabled her to escape unhurt.

Later that night someone broke into her room and fled, after April had got into fighting style.

"Strange thing, sir, in all these incidents," reported April to Mr. Waverly, "is that I could quite easily have been killed as a result of any of them. It seems as though I have been given an escape route in each case, as though they were meant only to scare me off"

"Could well be, Miss Dancer. Could well be," agreed Waverly.

April decided to take the initiative herself. So far she'd only looked around the surface of the ski-school for clues. Now she was determined to scrape under the surface; dig deep if necessary. After all, Mark was missing and she had to find him, or find out what had happened to him.

She explored, carefully at first, but then more openly. No one seemed to mind. There was nothing suspicious. Until a couple of days later, a smart, blonde girl confronted her.

"Oh, Miss Dancer, I believe?"

"Yes, that's right," said April, smiling

"I'm terribly sorry to bother you," said the blonde, "but I do so hate ski-ing on my own. I'm not really a novice and I wondered, if you were not ski-ing with anyone today, whether we might go together."

It sounded a nice, friendly idea and April agreed. They put on their sweaters and ski-boots and collected their equipment.

Within half an hour they were gliding down the slopes. It was a glorious day and April was enjoying the speed and the thrills of ski-ing. Moreover, the blonde had turned out to be attractive company, not too pushing, but friendly.

April, however, was on her guard. THRUSH, so far, had not shown their hand. They might do so any time, in any way.

It was the blonde's idea that they should investigate the small hut towards the left.

"Oh, come on," she called to April. "It'll be fun. Let's go and see what's there."

The blonde led the way and April followed. They stopped at the hut, and April bent down to unfasten her skis.

S-s-s-o-o-s-h! From the corner of her eye April caught sight of the ski-stick swinging towards her. It would have been a cruel death-blow had it landed. But April rolled out of the way and faced the blonde.

Not a word passed between them. The blonde had already loosened her skis. April shook her right foot clear of her remaining ski and the two girls circled around one another. The blonde sprang and April countered. In the impact the blonde became a brunette—the attractive wig becoming dislodged and dropping into the snow.

"So," declared April, her teeth clenched. "If it isn't THRUSH agent Olga. I might have known."

The two girls grappled for a few moments, but then April had the measure of Olga and had her face-downwards in the snow. She twisted her arm to almost breaking-point.

"Tell me what it's all about," she snapped. "Tell me or I'll break your arm!"

April gave the arm a fraction more pressure and Olga yelped. "I'll tell you. I'll tell you," she shrieked.

"That won't be necessary, Olga

my dear." It was Dale Freberg and in his hand he held a gun. "Come inside, ladies. And for you, Miss Dancer, I have a special treat." His handsome features twisted into that evil smile as the two girls were pushed inside the hut.

Inside, the hut had been equipped as a THRUSH training school, similar to many others the crime organisation had established throughthe world. The hut itself was but a façade. It adjoined a huge hill, which had been excavated and was most ambitiously constructed and equipped, the snow on the hill acting as superb camouflage. Inside, there were electronic machines of extreme sophistication, programmed computers, banks of television screens and a complexity of machinery which provided information on a great many U.N.C.L.E. activities at a moment's notice.

April was staggered by the extent of the equipment.

"Oh, but my dear Miss Dancer You haven't seen anything . . . yet." Dale Freberg spoke in his usual smooth style. He motioned to an associate, who opened a door leading into a small back room. April was ushered forward. Then her eyes narrowed with horror and fury. There, sitting at wooden tables, were some twenty men and women. April's eyes quickly scanned them. They were all missing U.N.C.L.E. agents and towards the right, docile and looking completely indoctrinated, was Mark Slate.

The word escaped her lips involuntarily. "Mark. . . ."

"Of course," tantalised Freberg. "You recognise your associate, Mr. Slate. You see, Miss Dancer, here we have a school, not just for the training of THRUSH agents, but for the training of THRUSH agents *who were at one time with U.N.C.L.E.*"

Freberg smiled the evil smile. He was obviously enjoying treating April to the details of this master-plan. "Our scheme is simple, but it will be oh, so very effective. We snare U.N.C.L.E. agents into our trap, subject them to certain . . . shall we say . . . treatment, and then send them back to U.N.C.L.E. Now, Miss Dancer, there's nothing very evil in that, is there? Oh—there is just one thing I ought to mention: these people will be programmed, just like a computer, to carry out certain objectives which, I need hardly say, will not be entirely to U.N C.L.E.'s advantage. It will be their one aim and, like a puppet, they will carry out that aim . . . or die in attempting to do so "

Freberg stiffened slightly. "A little demonstration perhaps is called for, considering we have such a celebrated guest."

He looked round, pretending to select someone, but all the time with only one person in mind. "I will instruct Mark Slate to walk up to you, Miss Dancer, and to slap your face."

He passed his instructions into the master computer and the machine buzzed and clonked for a moment or two Then silence

The next instant, Mark got up out of his seat, walked to April and slapped her on the cheek. He turned and walked back to his seat.

"Of course, Miss Dancer, I could had I wished have asked Mr. Slate to kill you; or to return to U.N.C.L.E. headquarters and blow up the building. You get my point, Miss Dancer. . . ."

Startling though these revelations were, the Girl from U.N.C.L.E.'s mind was working furiously. While Freberg was taking so much pride in explaining his scheme, his guard was lowered. April took what she saw as her one chance. Her ski-goggles were still in her right hand and with all her force and accuracy she aimed them at Freberg.

April sprang forward to follow up her advantage, but Olga quickly intercepted the Girl from U.N.C.L.E.'s advance. The two girls grappled once more, but then halted as they heard Dale Freberg issue further instructions to the computer—this time he commanded Mark Slate to kill April Dancer.

The situation was tense as Mark got out of his seat and moved towards April A gun, held in his right hand, pointed at an unbelieving Girl from U.N.C.L.E.

"Stay where you are, Mark. Stop, Mark! Stop . . . or I'll have to shoot," gasped April. But Mark advanced steadily. There was only ten yards between them now . . . eight . . . seven. . . .

April's finger tightened round the trigger, but then it happened.

Mark Slate became Mark Slate once more, and not a robot. Like a flash he turned from April and leaped five yards across the room at an unsuspecting and astonished Dale Freberg. The two crashed together on the floor, and Mark rocketed a right fist into the THRUSH agent's face.

Meantime, April saw Olga's gun coming from her ski-jacket pocket.

Z-i-n-g. . . . April's gun spat and the bullet kicked the gun clean out of Olga's hand. In two minutes the tables had been completely turned and THRUSH's deadly plot had been exposed.

Back in U.N.C.L.E.'s headquarters Mr. Waverly was congratulating April and Mark on a job well done. "You both did extremely well . . . but I do wish you would report in as you should, Mr. Slate. It does make the situation difficult here."

"I'm sorry, sir, but it was rather difficult. Absolute secrecy was essential, if I was to deceive THRUSH into thinking I had been . . ." Mark hesitated to give emphasis to the word " . . *programmed*."

"How was that part of it, Mark?" inquired April.

"Freberg mistimed things, that's all, April. He forgot, in his enthusiasm, that I'd been under the treatment for not quite a week. Ten days is needed to put you right under."

Mark turned to April. Then, with a gentle, quizzical smile: "What I'd like to know, love, is: would you *really* have shot me. . . ."

April smiled back. "That you'll *never* really know, will you . . . love. . . ."

A girl's best friend

th s roomy Italian knit handbag. Automatic pisto , short wave radio micro-film, ske eton keys Internationa passport, miniature tape recorder: not the usual contents of a young lady's handbag, but then Apri Dancer is certainly not the *usual* type of young .ady. Her job necessitates that she carries these life-savers as well as her make-up and purse, perfume and comb, so it's not surprising her handbag bulges at the seams. What she needs is an Ita an knit handbag i ke this one, roomy and very sturdy, and—as April insists—extreme y elegant.

For a litt e over 30s. you can make one yourse.f from these instructions. The pattern is a simple cable and the bag frame itself is fitted in a jiffy.

Materials can be bought at any good handicraft shop or departmental store. Approximate prices of materia s are quoted at the time of going to press, as a gu de to the total costs involved.

Measurements. Finished bag 8½ in. wide across top; 10½ in. across base; 8 in. deep.

Materials. 2 Hanks Codacord by Craftware *approx. 11s. 6d per hank.*
22 cms. Nassau plastic bag frame *approx. 10s. each.*
¼ yd. Buckram stiffening *approx. 5s. per yd*
¼ yd. Lining materia
1 pair each of No. 8 and No. 5 knitting needles.
1 cable needle.

Tension. 4 sts to 1 in. 8 rows to 1 in. over garter stitch using No. 8 needles.

Abbreviations. K, knit; P, purl; tbl, through back of loop, CN, Cable needle; st, stitch; tog, together; patt, pattern.

Front Piece. Starting at the top of bag, cast on 39 sts on No. 8 needles. Ptbl across these sts.

1st Row of Pattern. (P1, K1 tbl, P1, K9) 3 times, P1, K1 tbl, P1—right side.

2nd Row. (K1, P1 tbl, K1, P9) 3 times, K1, P1 tbl, K1.

3rd Row. (P1, K1 tbl, P1, s p next 3 sts on to CN and leave at back, K1, then K3 from CN, K1, slip next st on to CN and leave at front, K3, then K1 from CN) 3 times, P1, K1 tb , P1.

4th Row. As 2nd row.

These 4 rows complete pattern. Check tension and width at this point. Cast on edge should measure 8 in

10 patterns are knitted for each piece.

Shaping is achieved by working 3 increases in the specified rows as follows.

1st Row of 4th pattern. Keeping the pattern running, increase by knitting into the front and back of the 2nd, 14th, 26th and 38th sts (middle of ribbing), working the extra sts as Ptbl on wrong side, and Ktbl on right side (43 sts).

1st Row of 7th pattern. Increase as before into the 2nd, 15th, 28th and 41st sts (47 sts, working extra sts as before).

1st Row of 9th pattern. Increase in the 1st and last sts only (49 sts). Work these 2 extra sts as K2 on wrong side, and P2 on right side.

When 10 patterns are completed, put sts on to spare needle until back piece is knitted.

Back Piece. Work as Front Piece.

To Cast Off. Put both pieces of knitting each on their respective needles together, wrong sides inside, K 1st st on both needles together, K 2nd st on both needles together, slip 1st st on right hand needle over 2nd. Continue in this way until all sts are cast off.

Gussets. Make 2.

Using No. 5 needles cast on 8 sts

1st and 2nd Rows. K.

3rd and 4th Rows. Increase in 1st st, K to end

Repeat these 4 rows until 16 sts are on needle. Continue knitting on these 16 sts until gusset measures 6 in. down the centre. Cast off.

To make up. The front and back pieces are now joined together.

Press them lightly under a damp cloth on wrong side with a fairly warm iron. Width at join (base of bag) 10½ in. tapering to 8½ in. at top edges, length 16 in.

Cut piece of buckram stiffening 10 in. square. Fold in half and taper off open ends to only 8½ in. wide, but leaving width of buckram along fold at 10 in. Stitch to main piece, the top ends of stiffening reaching to the first increase row. Join knitted gussets to main part of bag with a row of double crochet. If you can't crochet, sew sides up neatly with matching thread. Top of gussets come 1 in below top of main part, the centre of gussets and bag matching at base.

Secure all ends. Cut lining 16 in. wide and 15 in. deep. Fold in half, machine down sides, ¼ in. turnings allowed. Turn in ¼ in. at top edge and stitch under first cable row.

Thread rods of bag frame under first cable

An Unquiet Vacation

"LACQUER, señorita?"

The girl with the jet hair coolly sweeping cheeks that had not emerged pink and steaming from under the dryer, gestured the spray away. She rose from the tiny, two-way dressing-table with the two-way mirror, the last in a long line of such tables; paused at the bow-fronted, lavender-quilted reception desk to pay and tip, then walked erect on high, golden heels into the foyer, where she paused to apply fresh lipstick and light a cigarette. She cocked an amused, expectant eye at the mirror, set high and corner-wise to reflect the salon.

All within was peaceful, sluggish even. Cocooned by strip lighting and an air-cooling system that worked like a dream from the hot, dry sun. Half-past eleven by the gilt-framed wall clock. Middle-aged señoras browsing under the lavender hoods of dryers with glossy magazines, or chatting volubly on their release. One sausage-legged señora waiting on the long dais at the end of the salon to be shampooed by Madame Berthe's newest, youngest assistant. Madame Berthe herself, of course, was not there. Could not be in Rome, Paris, London, Las Vagas and Quexto all at one time.

The girl watched an assistant procure a beaker of coffee from the machine; watched another pick up a lacquer spray to freeze wire-hard the silvery whipped-meringue structure atop the plastic-masked face of the President's wife. Saw a woman under a dryer cough, and receive her coffee; another mop a trickle of dye from her forehead.

Suddenly, it broke—erupted! The plastic mask was dashed to the ground and cracked underfoot. Mirrors were shattered; plugs ripped from the lavender walls; dryers, brushes, chairs hurled. . . . Women were screaming, fighting, falling. . . .

One tore the blind from the solitary window and thrust it out over the wide main street, following it with a flurry of towels.

Smiling, the girl turned towards the automatic gilt-scrolled exit doors Behind her came hurtling a little trolley. In side-stepping one peril, she fell victim to another: stopped with the side of her head the wild flight of the steel-spined appointments book, and crumpled on to the lavender carpet.

As the trolley somersaulted its way down the stairs, scattering pins and rollers, blood dripped on to the edge of the appointments book

All had not gone exactly as planned!

"Nice of Mr. Waverly to give us a vacation."

"Was it?" said April Dancer cautiously.

Mark sent forth an exasperated sigh over the dark head of his fellow U.N.C.L.E. agent. "Some people have very suspicious minds," he declared.

"I was only remembering," said April, "that our respected boss had May 24th triple-ringed on his calendar—in purple! The 24th is Freedom Day here."

"So he wanted us to enjoy the Fiesta!"

"I hope *enjoy* is the word," said April.

Mark spread his arms in despair. "Look around you, April Dancer Where on earth's varied face could you find a more idyllic place than this? Smiling welcomes everywhere, perfect hotel service; leisure and courtesy undreamed of in our world Even an invitation to dine at the Presidential Palace. In four years flower beds have replaced the barricades, and students laze and argue on the campus of their new university instead of rotting in gaol. Policemen carry no weapons! All this, thanks to President Huarez. Not since I joined U.N.C.L.E. have I known such peace."

Which was the precise moment the blind came hurtling from Madame Berthe's salon and Mark was shrouded in lavender towelling. The noise of the fracas burst through the open window for all Quexto to hear.

"Come on!" exclaimed April.

Flinging off the last of the towels, Mark hastened after her, leaping the trolley which had heeled over drunkenly at the foot of the stairs, and treading rollers. Inside the salon chaos was still raging. April ducked a chair, and waded through a frothy mess of shampoo, lacquer, dye, water.

. Someone had turned on all the taps.

To Mark Slate it was a revelation. He relieved a woman, bedraggled and half in rollers, of a length of hose which she was wielding with evil abandon, and slapped the face of another who, wheeling her legs wildly atop the reception desk, was having hysterics.

At that moment the police arrived. The women and lavender-smocked assistants, some conscious and some not, but the latter noticeably subsiding, began to be carried, dragged or assisted out.

Fingernails, Mark reflected ruefully, did as much damage in Quexto as elsewhere.

April stooped over the girl with the jet hair who was stirring. She mopped at her forehead with a wad of cottonwool. "Soon have you out of here," April whispered comfortingly, as an ambulance screamed to a halt in the street.

With the savage strength of an animal, the girl knocked her away and leapt for the doors. A policeman went sprawling against the stair handrail at the violence of her exit. Wildly, she emerged into the street and tore through the twin groups of curious spectators. At the corner a cruising cream car scooped her up.

April, who had rushed futilely after her, snapped her fingers in exasperation.

Inside the salon, amazement was changing to apprehension, shot with panic. The woman apprehended creeping from behind the reception desk, whence she had jumped at the police entrance, had been recognised as the President's American wife.

"I hope she never finds out who

slapped her," Mark whispered, as Señora Huarez, her whipped meringue now a disordered bird's nest, was escorted weeping down the stairs.

"More important, who was the girl?" exclaimed April.

Rapidly, she flicked the blood-stained pages of the appointments book. "Here we are! Ten-thirty Señora Huarez, shampoo and set. . . ." April's finger froze upon the page. "That cream car, Mark; we've got to tail it."

"Some hope!"

"A glimmer. It's one-way traffic through the city centre. The car must have headed for the Desert Highway."

The devil was—parking not being allowed in the shopping centre—their car had to be left in the multi-storey car-park. It was several tortured minutes before they were leaping into it.

"Why the urgency?" pleaded Mark, catching up on his breathing

April thrust the appointments book at him and grabbed the steering-wheel. "Ninth entry down."

"Señorita Mavis Bird."

"Exactly."

April swung the car down the ramp to street level.

Mark remained puzzled.

April spelt it out for him. "Mavis —*Turdus musicus*—a song bird commonly known as THRUSH."

"At least, they'll not be expecting us on their tail," said April.

"You're not supposed to be doing more than eighty," commented Mark. "Neither is he," he added, as a scarlet monster hissed past them in the outer lane.

He suspected he would have found the scenery stark but interesting if he had been able to glimpse it through the dust they were raising. The pungent smell of hot rubber, as the tyres ate up the bleached road, got into his throat. Insect victims rustily splotched the windscreen.

Suddenly, April shouted something Mark couldn't hear for the wind whistling painfully in his ears. She tore her hand momentarily from the steering-wheel to point ahead exultantly.

Travelling at half their speed was the streamlined tail of a cream car April made to switch over to the outer lane. Now the scarlet monster was abreast of the cream car.

The machine-gun burst was realised rather than seen. The monster leapt on. From the cream car rose a scream from both larynx and tyres as the long nose rocketed sideways, pawed at some bushes, and plunged momentarily bonnet foremost—down a red rocky scar.

Their seat belts had kept the two figures in what was left of their seats. The nightmare somersaults had merely made more messy the damage the bullets had done.

But as Mark drew away, sickened at the generosity of the gunman, the girl rattled: "Leba, Leba. . . ."

Even as he leaned forward again, Mark's hope died.

"Puzzling last words," he commented, as he and April got back into their own car. "Now what?"

"A chat with Mr Waverly, I think, and then. . . ." She looked at her wrist-watch. "I guess I'd better get my hair done for tonight's dinner at the Presidential Palace." For his sake she managed a wry smile.

"Somebody was slapping my face and suddenly I became aware of how we were all behaving." Señora Huarez's eyes rested for an embarrassing moment on Mark's hot face. "Then I saw the Chief of Police stalk in. . . ." The Señora waved away the iced melon. "It was horrible—violence erupting like that for no reason."

"*No* reason?" April accepted a portion of melon and a little of the gingered honey syrup from a pleasing but plain china jug. All the previous president's extravagant gold and silver tableware had been sold or melted down. It made sense when you remembered how poor Acañopa had been beyond the palace gates.

"What reason could there be?"

Señora Huarez's eyes were troubled. "No one of any importance was in the salon except me. I do not speak conceitedly. It is a fact. And I, too, simply began to behave like a maniac. I was not *harmed*. Only if some enemy wished to wreck Madame Berthe's salon would the affair make sense."

"No one has ever attempted to wreck her other salons," pointed out April.

"Later there was the violence on the Desert Highway," put in the Chief of Police, with an anxious, almost pleading look at the silently eating President. "Such acts surely make it wise, imperative, that we listen to the Army Chief. My men should be armed tomorrow."

"Guns at our Freedom Day celebrations?" mocked the President. "Just because there have been two outbursts of violence in the capital today?"

"Even so. . . ."

The President laughed, but looked displeased. "My friend, do you read the newspapers of other countries? I do. Only recently—in Florence—there was a little maid getting up a shirt for one of the hotel guests. A job she did many, many times a day. Suddenly, she went berserk. Another maid was hurt, the housekeeper knocked unconscious, the laundry room wrecked. Must we therefore suppose the President of Italy to be in danger?"

"Acañopa is only a tiny country. What happens in the capital could very well be related to you," burst out the Police Chief.

"No guns," said the President flatly.

The Chief of Police fidgeted unhappily. His son, Fernando, who was also present, cast an amused look at Mark.

"We must have the most jittery Army Chief in all South America," he confessed, as the three young people left the palace for Quexto's newest nightclub.

His father had remained behind for the President's final meeting with the Freedom Day organisers, and Señora Huarez, aware of how many hours next day she and her husband must remain exposed in the hot sun before the crowds, had retired to bed.

"He has been on at my father all afternoon, no doubt, and now our Chief of Police is also a bundle of nerves. Yet so respected is the President that not even out of their love would our people displease him by behaving wildly."

As they entered the nightclub, a golden cage full of golden girls was descending over the horseshoe stage.

Fernando greeted some laughing fellow students—among them a red-headed girl—and ordered drinks from a courteous, friendly waiter. The red-headed girl winked at them as last from the cage stepped a glacially cool offering from America, microphone held to silver-frosted lips.

Her act, Fernando whispered, was reputed to hot up. On this occasion it did so with startling abruptness. One moment, as Mark had his thumb upon the lever of the soda syphon the waiter had deposited in front of him, the ice maiden was drooling bored emotion in a harshly husky voice. The next, as the red-headed girl grabbed the syphon, and, squirting hard, scored a bulls-eye, the ice maiden became an active volcano.

Scattering golden figures; screams; the crash and scrunch of broken glass; the ice maiden whirling the red headed girl by her long hair; somebody squirting the soda in all directions; the waiter flinging glasses and bottles at the mirrored walls.

"Out into the open!" yelled April, and Mark hauled the astounded Police Chief's son, who had been blowing his nose, towards the door. They became firmly jammed there with a thin, moustached figure, also bent on escaping.

Like corks from a bottle, they shot into the brightly lit street.

"Somebody," declared the thin man, bones unknown beyond anatomy books working furiously beneath his brown skin, "should call the police."

"I pressed the alarm lever as I was hauled out," said Fernando.

"Indeed."

Fernando collected his wits sufficiently to introduce them.

"Miss Dancer, Mr. Slate—this is our new lecturer in science at the university—Professor Leba, Leba. . . ."

"Lebarosi," said the man. "Good night."

He turned away from them, hailed a passing taxi, and stepped briskly into it.

"You are not serious," protested Fernando.

April was too intent on keeping the taxi's tail light in sight to answer.

"Why should *anyone* wish to kill President Huarez?"

"A craving for power; a desire to drain off the present booming wealth of Acañopa into private pockets. . . . Besides," added Mark, "there's an organisation called THRUSH."

"All this, just because of a riot in a nightclub?" said Fernando incredulously.

"*And* a riot in a hairdresser's *and* two bullet-riddled bodies on the Desert Highway."

"And a little maid turning berserk as she ironed a guest's shirt," said April, half to herself.

"Somebody," she said more loudly, "has the power to turn nice ordinary people suddenly into hooligans, lunatics! Tomorrow there is going to be a very large crowd indeed of nice ordinary people massed before the President and his wife. Imagine if they go suddenly berserk!"

"But why should they?"

"*How* should they?" April corrected him. "Somebody Lebarosi, I suspect—has been proving something to somebody today, and trying to frighten a few other people, too."

"Who?"

"Ah!"

The tail-light ahead abruptly vanished, and yet they were on a straight road. Mark pressed the button of U.N.C.L.E.'s newest gadget, able to televise and illumine in the dark things ahead—or behind. At first the thing jammed. By the time he had released it, the minute screen in his hand showed only one person sitting in the taxi—the driver. His face was clearly reflected.

"Lebarosi must have jumped out!"

"At that speed, eighty miles from anywhere?"

April increased *their* speed, and relying on the two-way television, snapped off all *her* lights. The U.N.C.L.E. car became a road-skimming bat, invisible, and yet a thing of threatening substance. When it overshot the taxi, the driver was aware only of the blast-like *whump!*

"Now," said April, and Mark pressed another button releasing a jet of fine powder that, as the taxi's wheels ground over, seized and held them.

Mark had the door of the other vehicle open and the astounded, momentarily paralysed man out on the road before he had thought of reaching for his revolver.

April switched on her torch and wrenched open the back door of the taxi.

"Come out, Professor Lebarosi," she ordered.

But the body huddled under the back seat did not move. Leaning closer, April then saw the hole where the bullet had bored its way through to the jugular.

April swerved her torch towards the driver. "Now," she snapped, "tell us why you obviously persuaded Professor Lebaros to hide under the back seat and then shot him!"

There was a pause.

Fernando, pressing his gun hard into April's back, answered for him.

"Because he had served his purpose, Miss Dancer."

"A nice mess," gritted April. "I suppose we're being held as tomorrow's scapegoats."

"After Fernando & Co. have seized power? Seriously though, April, I know one tin of lacquer, one syphon of soda created a frightening outburst, but even Fernando couldn't arrange for hundreds of citizens to be innocently equipped with a spray of Lebarosi's devilish stuff. And if they

were *knowingly* equipped, there would surely be the danger of some of them informing."

"You forgot the tin of liquid starch the maid used in the Florence hotel," April reminded him bitterly. "The *first* of Lebarosi's guinea-pigs, as far as we know. And anyway ..."

She broke off as the loudspeaker in the wall above them began to crackle.

"Police, repeat, all police, to be equipped tomorrow with tear-gas in case of further disturbances," declared a voice. "In view of tonight's outbreak of violence in the Golden Girls Nightclub, President Huarez has agreed ..."

April cut across the words with a deep sigh. "I thought that would be it! Don't you see, Mark? One little incident, provoked, of course, and on goes the first tear-gas spray. Instantly, that section of the crowd will go wild, so on will go all the other sprays, and hell's pandemonium will be let loose. The President and his wife—*regrettably*—will be victims of the violence, and anybody else in Quexto that Fernando and his clique don't like, and before the end of the day Fernando will be filling the dead President's shoes. Back for sure will come those barricades."

"Using his father as his tool," snorted Mark in disgust. "Lebarosi's dead so he won't talk."

"He didn't get paid, either," said April suddenly. "What time did Fernando say the lorry was coming?"

"Half past one."

"Not much time."

Mark's eyes suddenly popped. "Hardly the place for physical exercises, old thing."

April grinned, but did not pause in her violent rocking, even though they were lying on narrow slats slung over a wide tank of acid. Like Mark, her arms had been firmly roped behind her back and her ankles lashed together. Like him, she had not been gagged, for there was no chance of anybody hearing them in the empty house where Professor Lebarosi had worked in secret. Empty, that was, except for Fernando and his henchman, the bogus taxi driver, and *they* had gone above to wait for the lorry from Army headquarters.

It was here, as April had suspected, that the switch was to be done. Containers of tear-gas were to become containers of Lebarosi's concoction, and she had no doubt that the two contents *appeared* identical.

April, her knees drawn up, increased velocity until she was able to propel herself on to her feet. For agonising moments the slat swayed violently and she almost lost her balance. But somehow she managed to get upright again, and finally the slat was still. She judged her distance to the floor, judged her chance of making it, and, with a silent prayer, leapt, crashing just clear of the tank's edge.

"Never do that again," pleaded Mark, opening his eyes.

"Can *you*?" said April shakily.

"Anything you can do, lady ..."

And now April shut her eyes tight till she heard a thump and not the dreaded splash.

Once again April rocked herself up on to her feet, and jumped over to the corner where Fernando had thrown her shoes. Propelling them

before her, she jumped back to Mark, who obligingly sat up and began chafing the rope that bound his ankles on the sharp inner edge of the heel, while April kept the shoe still by pressing down hard upon it with her soles.

The thin, sharply serrated edge rapidly sawed through the rope, and he was able to kick clear. Next, he knelt down, and worked on the rope about his wrists. This was more difficult as he had to twist his head to see what he was doing

Once free, he was able to pick up the shoe and release April.

U.N.C.L.E. agents were admirably equipped to deal with locks, even upon the soundest doors.

"Now what?" whispered Mark, when they were safely in the passage outside.

Silently, April indicated the window ahead, and pointed to the lorry waiting at the foot of the slope beneath the window, a lorry whose trailer was loaded neatly with twin lines of identical containers, identical, that is, except in one particular. This they learnt listening to the huddle of dark figures against the wall.

It was just a question of the U.N.C.L.E. agents managing to escape from the window in time.

"All right, you managed to conceal yourselves on the lorry and switch the yellow stickers for blue so that the wrong containers were dumped. What happened next?" demanded Mr. Waverly.

"Well, nothing, sir."

Mr. Waverly raised incredulous brows. "Nothing?"

"Fernando's deliberately provoked disturbance at the Freedom celebrations brought forth a solitary shot of tear-gas, that was all. No riot. No need for the waiting military to be called in with rifles."

"Fernando," added April, "did not enjoy the day, I think."

"Really?"

"And er. . ."

"Yes, Miss Dancer?"

"There was just *one* other thing. Fernando has ordered that the blue containers be dumped in the Tacquiqa River, *en route* for Quexto. There is something in today's papers about the fish behaving very oddly there. One man declares he was attacked by a Geophagus Acuticeps."

"Fisherman's stories," said Mr. Waverly, "get taller every year."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, Miss Dancer, I trust you and Mr. Slate enjoyed your little vacation."

The two U.N.C.L.E. agents looked at each other.

"It was hardly *quiet*, sir."

APRIL ABROAD

A girl from U.N.C.L.E. must be prepared for anything, dodging bullets one minute, entertaining foreign diplomats the next.

Fortunately, April enjoys cooking and during less active moments on her travels—not a THRUSH agent in sight—she has gathered together a fine collection of characteristic dishes of the many countries she has visited.

Here's a selection of her most complimented recipes. Try them for yourself.

Hawaiian Steakburgers

1 (8 oz.) pkt. Findus steakburgers
4 slices of bread
4 pineapple rings
4 cherries
2–4 oz. grated cheese
Parsley or watercress sprigs

Serves 4

Fry the steakburgers according to the packet instructions. Remove them from the frying-pan and put on to the grilling pan. Fry the bread until golden brown on both sides, adding more fat if necessary. Place a pineapple ring on top of each steakburger, add a cherry and sprinkle with cheese. Grill until golden brown. Serve at once on the fried bread.

Cheese Portuguese

1 slice of bread
½ oz. Kraft margarine
2 Kraft cheese slices
1 medium tomato
4 brislings or sardines
Sprig of parsley

1 serving

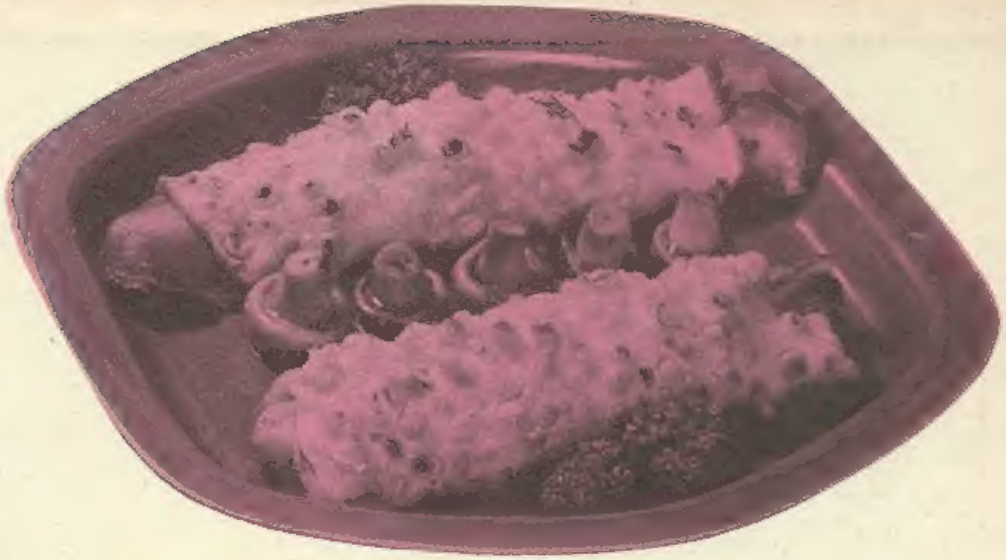
Toast a slice of bread, spread with margarine and add a Kraft cheese slice. Top with 4 slices of tomato and 4 brislings. Cut a cheese slice into 2 triangles and place across brislings. Grill until cheese is just melted and garnish with a sprig of parsley. Serve at once.

Basque Kedgeree

1 (13 oz.) pkt. Findus smoked haddock
6 oz. long grain rice
2 eggs
3 oz. butter
Salt and pepper
Chopped parsley

Serves 3–4 portions

Cook the smoked haddock according to the packet instructions. Boil the rice in fast-boiling salted water for 15 minutes. Boil the eggs for 10 minutes until they are hard. Strain the rice. Drain the fish and flake with a fork. Shell the eggs—chop one egg and slice the other. Melt the butter in a saucepan and add the flaked fish, rice and chopped egg. Season generously, heat through and then pile the kedgeree on to a hot serving dish, sprinkle with chopped parsley and arrange the sliced egg on top as a garnish. Serve piping hot.



Prairie Pancakes

4 oz. plain flour
Pinch of salt
2 eggs
¼ pt. milk
Butter or lard for cooking
1 small pkt. frozen sweet corn or
1 small tin
8 small rashers of grilled bacon
¼ lb. mushrooms
Sprigs of parsley for garnishing

Serves 4 portions—2 pancakes per person

Cook the frozen corn or drain the juice from tinned corn and put on one side. Make pancake mixture as follows: Sieve the flour and salt into a basin. Make a well in the centre, add the eggs and a little of the milk. Stir, drawing in the flour from the sides, beat well until smooth. Gradually add the rest of the milk, stirring and beating thoroughly. Now mix the cooked sweetcorn in with the pancake mixture. Transfer the batter with the sweetcorn into a jug so that just the right amount may be poured into the pan. Too much batter makes the pancakes thick and stodgy. Melt small knob of butter in the frying-pan, just enough to cover the base, pour off any excess fat and use for next pancake. When fat is hot, pour in sufficient batter mixture to cover the bottom of the pan thinly. When the underside is sufficiently brown toss or turn the pancake over and cook the other side. Roll pancake round a rasher of grilled bacon, turn out on to a warmed plate and garnish with a few mushrooms and sprigs of parsley. Repeat with remainder of the batter.

This recipe makes 8 pancakes cooked in a frying-pan with a 7-inch base.

Dishes to tempt all tastes

Quickie Moussaka

½ oz. Kraft Family margarine
1 small onion about 2½ oz.
½ lb. minced beef
2 lbs. Kraft tomato chutney
1 (6 oz.) pkt. Kraft Velveeta cheese food

Serves 2–3 portions

Melt the margarine in a saucepan. Peel and finely chop the onion, add it to the margarine and fry until it is soft and lightly browned. Add the minced beef and cook until the meat is crumbly, stirring continuously. Mix in the tomato chutney thoroughly, cover the saucepan and cook very gently for 7 minutes. Cut cheese into ½ in. cubes and add to the meat mixture. Cook gently, stirring occasionally until all the cheese is melted. Serve on hot toast or with noodles.

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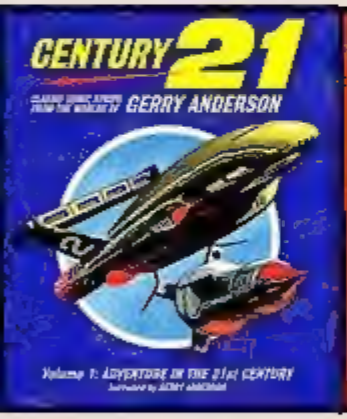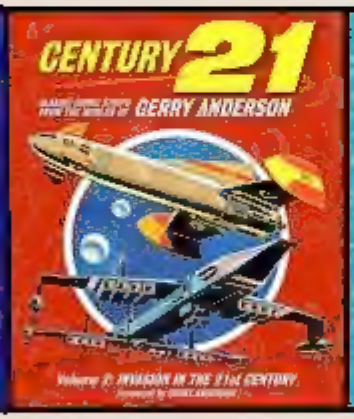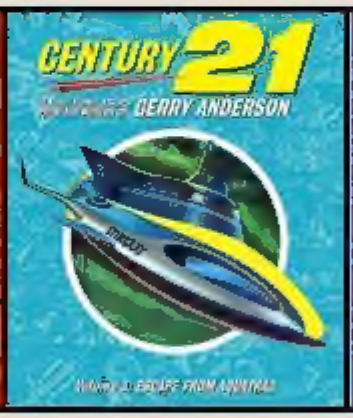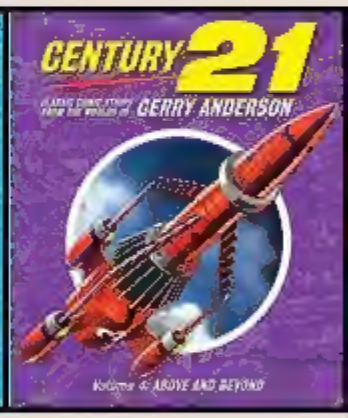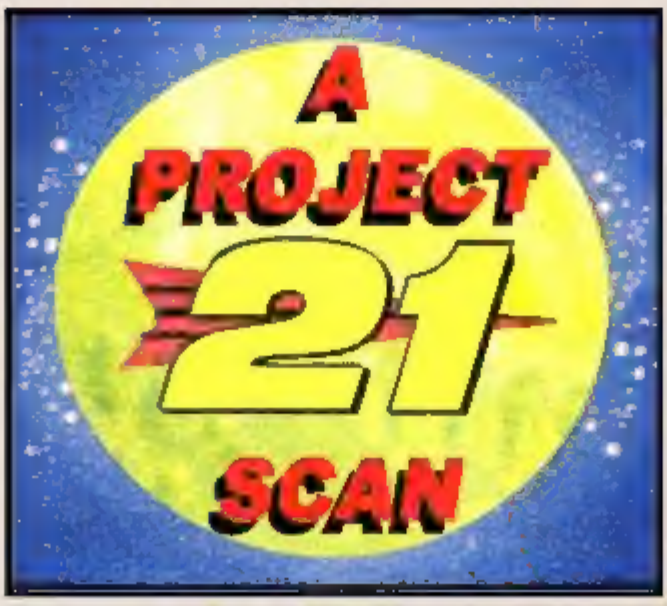
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